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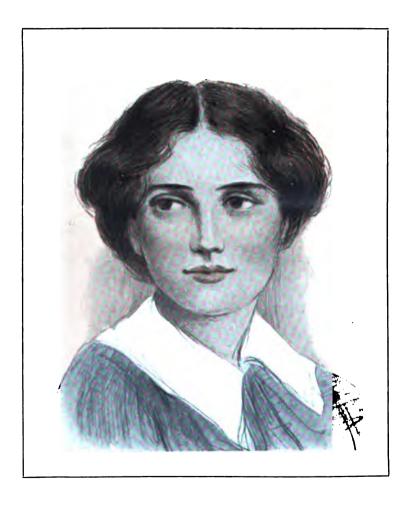
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CHAPTER I

WHEREIN THE READER FINDS HIMSELF IN THE BOROUGH

T is generally agreed among competent and sympathetic observers that there is no quarter of London more thoroughly and dismally in tone with fog and grime, drizzle and grease, mud and slush, sooty chimnevs and all those thick and suffocating slum smells which ooze up from between the dripping iron bars of pavement gratings, descend with the smuts from the chimneypots, and filter out into the street through the crevices of dirty windows and the cracks and kevholes of greasy doors, than that last refuge and stronghold of ancient and genuine Cockneyism known as the Borough; and we believe that in the opinion of the natives themselves there is no part of the Borough so saturate and sodden with this reeking atmosphere of the town, no part of it so snugly tucked up and packed away in the smoke and damp and mildew of London, as the dingy fusty streets and the foul little courts and allevs which run like so many twisting ratholes from that main drain with the beautiful name of Tabard Street.

However this may be, it was certainly in one of the shabbiest and gloomiest of these alleys, on a choking and foggy afternoon in December not many years



THE READER FINDS HIMSELF

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ago, that a London solicitor of the most impeccable respectability, by name, Mr. Thomas Jevvers, was waiting, not without a great deal of impatience, for the heroine of this history.

A row of two-storeyed houses ran along the side of the street where Mr. Jevvers was loitering. Each house had three windows and a door, and most of the doors had their numbers marked with chalk high up out of reach of children's fingers, while in almost every case a piece of cord hung from a hole by the latch enabling the rightful children to enter without calling their mothers from the washtub in the back kitchen. On the opposite side of the street stood huddled together a range of rotten buildings, some of them stables, some of them mean factories, and some of them sheds for the storage of rags and bottles. To a particular block of these buildings, which wore a rather more forlorn appearance than the others, and was moreover boarded up as far as the broken windows of the first floor. Mr. Jevvers from time to time directed a fierce and very decidedly antagonistic gaze. Occasionally he would place a pair of gold-rimmed eyeglasses on the bridge of his nose and tilt back his head to stare contemptuously at the mouldering ruin which so offended him.

Mr. Jevvers was a short, plump, middle-aged gentleman. From the top of his hat to the soles of his well-brushed highlows he was typical of London's professional classes. Even without the background of that dreary street, with its sopping pavements and its blackened buildings, he looked prosperous, he looked successful, he looked unemotional. His square dough-coloured face, with its small dark bullying eyes, its full chin with a tight dent in the centre, like the hole made by bakers in the top of a loaf, its long and relent-

less upper lip, and its twin bushes of sandy whiskers, advertised a mind in all things direct, energetic and remorseless.

His garments, too, from the unfashionable silk hat on his solid head to the dark blue gaiters on his square-toed shoes—even if one took no account of his ivory-handled umbrella, his thick manful overcoat, free from the effeminancy of a velvet collar, and his warm olive-coloured kid-gloves, lined with wool and stitched with silver thread—announced him to all who had eyes to see as a highly respectable family man, well cared for by a devoted wife, respected by his bankers, conscious of hard-headedness, and implicitly trusted by all who sought his counsel.

His back was flat, his front was bow-windowed; and he walked like a man having authority. One felt that he was possibly a churchwarden, which happened to be the case, and that he had a reverence for the British Constitution, and was habitually conscious of the might, majesty, power and dominion of the British Empire.

It is true that but for the presence of his cab at the end of the narrow street, Mr. Jevvers would have felt uneasy in his present surroundings. The roughs who slouched past him through the fog were not the people he was accustomed to deal with. The hooded women who came out from the little greasy yellow doors and moved away with humped shoulders to the alehouse at the end of the street, were certainly not the kind of ladies with whom he was accustomed to mix, either professionally or socially. Nor was he conscious, as he would like to have been, of the security due to a ratepayer, when a mouthful of blasphemous oaths rattled in his ears from one of the grimy windows.



4 THE READER FINDS HIMSELF

It was therefore with a sense of relief, which almost took away his antagonism for the block of buildings on the other side of the way, that he observed at last, coming towards him, surrounded by a noisy clattering group of ragged and bareheaded children, the young client who had called him to this dreadful street.

Beatrice Haly was by no means finely or fashionably dressed; the casual observer hurrying through that foggy street might have seen nothing notably incongruous between the tall girl and her affectionate body-guard of shabby children. She might have been a school teacher, a Government inspector, or a district visitor. It was only when you observed her closely that you detected in her the differences of education and tradition. It was not until you had known her for many months, and only then if your own mind was of a quiet and penetrative nature, that you discovered in her something which charmed and compelled homage.

She was neither small of stature nor shy of manner; she escaped observation only by the quiet of her behaviour and the contemplative nature of her disposition. She was never *en evidence*: she had always to be discovered.

At the time of our story she was six-and-twenty, a tall and handsomely formed woman, with grave calm eyes, the complexion of a brunette, and rich brown hair tinged with red, which she wore in Madonna fashion. Her features were remarkable neither for regularity nor beauty. The charm of her countenance, for those who discovered it, was a gracious serenity which, one felt, rather issued through her eyes and lips from the invisible tranquillity of her mind, like

the perfume of a flower, than lay there obvious to the gaze of all men, like the stagnant quiet of a woodland pool.

She was the daughter of that good-natured Irishman, Pat Haly, who broke his neck at Becher's Brook in the Grand National of twenty years ago. Her mother was the only daughter and heiress of old Matthew King, a Quaker and one of the wealthiest timber merchants in the country. Her eldest brother died at Charterhouse, and the other son of Pat Haly, also a Carthusian, was killed in the Egyptian Campaign of 1898. At the age of twenty-two, motherless and with scarce a relation in the world, Beatrice had found herself the mistress of a large fortune, with her old governess, Miss Christabel Taylor, as her companion, and with her mother's lawyer, Mr. Thomas Jevvers, as the steward of her purse.

She lived in a small house in Charles Street, Berkeley Square. The circle of her acquaintance was not a large one, and but for her great wealth would, no doubt, have been smaller. She was regarded by fashionable people as heavy, as typically British—a fault in modern society regarded as intolerable. Girls whom the world called pretty and brilliant, spoke of the injustice of fate in giving enormous wealth to such a stick as Beatrice Haly, whose one accomplishment was horse riding, and who could have been quite happy in a country cottage on five hundred a year.

There were still a few men who attempted with pathetic persistency to win her fortune with the cards of love; but it was pretty generally agreed among her acquaintance that she was over head and ears in hopeless love with that quixotic *intellectuel* Richard Rodwell, and was far too plethoric to resent his

THE READER FINDS HIMSELF

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indifference and work herself into a condition of pique sufficient to wed any other man.

What puzzled the people of her acquaintance was the slowness of Richard Rodwell to take advantage of an invitation so frequently and almost immodestly presented to him by the wealthy Miss Haly. Beyond all question she was in love with him: apparently she was running after him and throwing herself at his head; and yet the foolish person steadfastly refused to take advantage of this rich gift from the gods.

As our story is concerned with this very matter, we will leave it, by the reader's kind consent, to the development of events, and go with Beatrice and her native bodyguard to meet the impeccable Mr. Jevvers.

He lifted his glasses from his nose and placed them carefully above the second button of his overcoat, as he moved forward to meet her. Then, as he drew near, he lifted his hat, disclosing across the bald crown of his head a high-combed fluff of light-coloured hair, and favoured her with one of his chill and skull-like smiles.

"I am a little late!" said Beatrice.

"Ten minutes," replied Mr. Jevvers.

The children crowded round them, the boys studying Mr. Jevvers, the girls staring up at Beatrice Haly, one bare-headed imp nestling her grubby cheek against the soft sable of Beatrice's muff. Mr. Jevvers, his right arm at full length, rested his hand on the top of his ivory-handled umbrella, and with his shoulders squared, his chest and stomach obtruded, faced his client with the air of a man prepared for battle.

We need not trouble the reader with a report of the dialogue between the solicitor and the lady, since it is not concerned with our story. It is only necessary to say that Beatrice wished to buy a block of buildings, to pull them down, and to erect in their place a hostel for factory girls. Mr. Jevvers had opposed the idea in correspondence, and now that he had seen the buildings for himself he was more than ever antagonistic. He said that the project was not for one person. He said that charity begins with income and stops at capital. To sacrifice capital for such a scheme would be a wild and even a wicked proceeding.

Beatrice, whose voice was exceedingly low and musical, with just the caressing suggestion of an Irish inflexion, explained that the need in that neighbourhood for such a hostel as her heart desired was a great one. Mr. Rodwell considered it to be almost the chief need of the place. She had expected him to meet Mr. Jevvers, but apparently something had occurred to prevent him. If Mr. Rodwell had been there he could have persuaded Mr. Jevvers in five minutes to sacrifice with the cheerfullest face in the world the necessary capital for so useful and humane a purpose.

In the sweetest and most charming manner imaginable the young lady expressed this resolute conviction; but the man of law remained immovable in his opposition. He had fifty reasons to urge against it. Miss Haly, he declared, was being victimized and exploited by the owners of the freehold. The property was not worth one-fifth of the sum they were demanding. His thin lips opened and shut vehemently with the energy of his interest in her affairs. It distressed him to see her victimized by a set of swindling rogues. He begged her to reconsider the matter. He declared that the street was the very worst in the world for such a purpose as she contemplated. Give him three months, give him one month, and he would discover

for her a building admirably adapted to a hostel for factory girls, the maintaining cost of which could easily be borne by her income.

They were talking in this fashion, much to the perplexity of the blue-faced and teeth-chattering children surrounding them, when a cheeky-faced boy of twelve came trotting down the street, pushing his way through the circle of children until he had planted himself right in front of Beatrice, his hands in his pockets, his legs wide apart.

"Ullo, Miss Aly!" he said, grinning up into her face.

"Hullo, Freddy," she answered.

"I saw your carriage at the end of the street," he said, with a puff after his exercise.

"How's your mother?" inquired Miss Haly. The widowed mother of this boy, who earned her living by splitting cane, was one of Miss Haly's favourites.

"Aven't you eard?" he asked.

"Not a word."

"Strite you aven't?"

"Honour bright."

"She's pretty near sliced her thumb off," replied the boy, grinning harder than ever. He had a snub nose, a long upper lip and small puffy eyes. "Truth she has. My word, she is bad. Been to the orspital, she has. Night before last; just before tea; she was working in the dark and I was cooking a bloater at the fire; and it was a bad lot of cricket-pad cane; you know. Slish! went the razor; right down here, and come out there, right in the fat part, wallop! 'Now, I hev done it!' says mother, and bursts out laughing. It was a treat, I tell yer."

The graphic young gentleman proceeded to describe

certain lurid details of the accident which we will certainly spare the reader, and then went on just as cheerfully:—

"But mother didn't seem to mind much. She took it to the fire, hes a look at it, and then she says, 'Well, I am a silly devil!—drop that bloater,' she says, 'and go and fetch Miss Aly's Nurse, and look sharp or you'll get no tea to-night.' But she's bad. She is, strite. She sits all the bloomin' day over the fire, crying because she can't get on with her work. The doctor told her he may hev to take her arm orf, up to the elbow. 'I'll watch it!' says mother. 'You may die if I don't,' says the doctor. 'I've never tried that,' she says: 'it will be a new experience.' But she is bad. She keeps crying, and can't eat her tea, and the pain won't let her sleep at night."

"I'll come to see her," said Beatrice. "Go, and give her my love; say I am coming to see her in a few minutes."

The boy was about to trot away, when he checked himself. "Eard about Mr. Rodwell?" he cried.

The little bullying eyes of Mr. Jevvers darted a glance at Miss Haly, and watched her curiously under the brim of his hat.

"What about Mr. Rodwell?" she inquired, patting the head of the imp at her side.

Freddy smiled. "He done a swoon last night at the Art Class. Blimey, I never saw a man go down so sudden. White! He was like a bit of chalk."

"Is he better to-day?" Beatrice inquired quietly.

"I don't expect so," replied the cheerful Freddy. "You oughter hev seen him do his fall back. My eye, it was a wunner, I tell yer. He went all of a sudden white, then he gives a gurgle, and smack!



THE READER FINDS HIMSELF

down he goes, just as if some one had shot him through the nut."

"Dear me," said Mr. Jevvers; "I am sorry to hear it."

"We know now why Mr. Rodwell has not kept his appointment," said Beatrice. Then, turning to Freddy, she said: "Go, and tell your mother I'll be with her in five minutes. She must cheer up. You must help her, Freddy."

The boy ran off, and the children surrounding Beatrice began to tell, each in a separate key, what they had heard of Mr. Rodwell's sudden illness. Beatrice bade them go back to their homes; it was time for tea, she said, and gave them various promises of coming to see their mothers and fathers on another day. With the exception of the imp, who still clung to her muff, the children obeyed this command, and as they scampered off into the yellowing gloom, Miss Haly with the lawyer at her side walked forward to the end of the street.

- "I am sorry to hear this about Mr. Rodwell," said the lawyer. "Evidently he is not a strong man."
 - "No, he is not a strong man," she replied.
- "By the way," said Mr. Jevvers, in his best attempt at an amused and friendly indifference, "what is the exact mystery about this interesting man?"
 - "Mystery?"

IO

- "I have heard," said Mr. Jevvers, slackening a little in his pace, "that there was some bother after he left Oxford."
 - "Indeed?" replied Beatrice, rather coldly.
- "Yes, I have been told that he came down from Oxford, and was actually ordained and about to take up a curacy somewhere in East London, when,

IN THE BOROUGH

without a word to any one, he suddenly went off, clean out of England, and remained abroad for nearly a year."

"Yes?"

"I thought you would know if the story had any truth."

"Mr. Rodwell was ordained after he came down from Oxford," she replied. "I have never heard of any bother."

They arrived at the end of the street. "People have often said to me," Mr. Jevvers explained, "that it is curious a man should so suddenly give up his profession, the profession of the Church, too; and they have hinted that after ordination there was some little bother with the Bishop, something which ended in Mr. Rodwell's return to the lay ranks of the community. But," he added, easily and tolerantly, "people will talk."

"Oh, no doubt," answered Beatrice.

Mr. Jevvers told his cabman, who put away the newspaper he was reading by the aid of a street-lamp, to wait for him, and accompanied Miss Haly to her carriage.

The imp looked with challenge at the tall footman in his long drab-coloured coat with black collar, black buttons and black cuffs, as if she wished him to observe that she was on the most intimate terms with his mistress.

"I suppose you wish to drive back in the carriage, Sally?" inquired Miss Haly.

Sally grinned and shook herself violently inside her clothes.

"No hat, and bare arms!" exclaimed Beatrice.
"What will Miss Taylor say to you?"



THE READER FINDS HIMSELF

T2

She went to the big roomy carriage, whose iron arms and baggy leather hood were beaded with foggy moisture, but whose nice clean smell of varnish was Sally's favourite scent, and peered into the inner gloom.

"Christabel?" she called, and a muffled voice replied in the mournfullest anticipation of disastrous tidings. "My dear?"

"Mr. Jevvers wishes to pay you his respects," said Beatrice; "and here is Sally who wants you to drive her to Prince's Court."

Mr. Jevvers took Beatrice's place at the carriage door and inquired after Miss Taylor's health. That venerable female was huddled up in the farthest corner of the carriage. She looked as if she had just got hurriedly out of bed and had dragged on for raiment as many of the disordered bed clothes as she could clutch in her panic hurry. Somewhere about her one caught glimpses of what appeared to be a quilt, a bolster, a sheet, a blanket, and a hot-water bottle. She wore round her shoulders a white shawl over a black one and held the ends of both tightly against her mouth: her mushroom hat with its black gauze veil was bound on to her head by something in the nature of a tent which gave to the back view of the old lady's head the appearance of a large family's Christmas pudding tied up in a bag and waiting patiently to be boiled. She grasped in her free hand a fawn-coloured Jaeger rug, dragging it upward to her bosom like a sleeper too long for the blankets. Cushions were arranged behind her shoulders, and she was seated upon an air cushion with her woollined elastic-sided boots in a foot-muff. On her hands were a monstrous pair of black Jaeger gloves.

Miss Taylor was understood to say through her

shawl, that her asthma was much worse, that her bronchitis was about the same, and that to leave her suffocating in the atmosphere of the Borough was certainly the quickest means which Miss Haly could devise for getting rid of her. Whether she said this or not, she accompanied her mutterings with the most vigorous and eloquent of head-shakings, and appeared to be almost passionately moved by the subject of her discourse. Mr. Jevvers agreed with every word he could not hear, and ended by requesting her to take the utmost pains to preserve her health, seeing that the number of good people in the present degenerate times was perceptibly and alarmingly small.

Sally was lifted into the carriage by the tall foot-man—a crowd of hooded women in Tabard Street looking on, a postman glancing over his shoulder at the spectacle, and two policemen pausing at the street corner to take notice of the suspicious proceeding—and then the carriage door was shut, the footman after receiving his instructions from Miss Haly mounted the box, and away went the big black horses through the fog and gloom of Tabard Street, carrying the delighted Sally back to her tea in Prince's Court.

"I am going to see Freddy's mother," said Miss Haly, giving her hand to the lawyer. "Thank you for having taken the trouble to come and see my buildings. I will write to you in a few days."

She passed up the street, the eyes of the women under their grey shawls following her tall figure and noting the fashion of her garments; and Mr. Jevvers entered his cab and drove away through the fog.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH MR. RODWELL ANNOUNCES THAT HE HAS RECEIVED A CALL.

HEN Beatrice had comforted Freddy's mother she set out to call upon Richard Rodwell. As she came through Globe Street into Trinity Street she observed through the tall railings guarding the hideous stucco church in the centre of Trinity Square, the blinking lights of a hansom cab moving away from the house in which Mr. Rodwell lived. Wondering who his visitor had been, and trying to assure herself that the cab did not argue a serious illness, Beatrice crossed the square, reached the house and was admitted by Mrs. Lovejoy.

Mrs. Lovejoy, who was enormously fat and suffered from a wheezing in her throat, and wore her hair combed sharply off her forehead and twisted up into a little walnut at the back, presented a grave and gloomy face to Beatrice and shook her head most seriously over Rodwell's condition.

"It's my belief," she said, leaning one arm against the wall of the passage, and resting the other across the comfortable ledge formed by her waist, "that he gets no good out of that there Canon from St. Paul's Cathedral who keeps on coming down here worriting him almost every afternoon with two or three hours

MR. RODWELL'S CALL

of religious conversation. He's all-ways worse after them visits, all-ways. And he's rare bad this time," she continued, lowering her voice and bobbing her head forward in a series of confidential nods; "ah, he is indeed; it's my belief he's more bad than he knows hisself. Why, look; a delicate man like him, might go off at any moment—at any moment, he might."

"I'll go up and see him," said Beatrice, and she mounted the narrow stairs leaving Mrs Lovejoy to waddle and wheeze her way to the lower regions. Beatrice Haly thought no more of paying Rodwell a visit in his rooms than of going into any other house in the Borough.

Rodwell's sitting room, with its two long windows. faced towards Trinity Street, and enjoyed a clear and uninterrupted view of the big square. It was a tall and comfortable room with a handsome Adams' mantelpiece of white marble which Rodwell himself had put in. The furniture consisted almost entirely of satinwood in a Sheraton design and on a hand-made smoke-coloured carpet stood out lightfully and gracefully against the silver grey of the wall-paper. Soft blue curtains in comfortable folds hung from ancient French cornices, and the space between the two windows was filled with a beautiful kidney-shaped table on which was set a bronze chrysanthemum. On little ormolu tables and in the pigeon-holes of his writing cabinet were many beautiful miniatures, enamels, pieces of china and old silver. His chief works of art were a wonderful copy of the Christ in Leonardo's Last Supper above the mantelpiece; and a very good plaster cast of the Venus of Milo which stood on a table beside the miniature grand-piano,

6 MR. RODWELL ANNOUNCES THAT

with its pastoral medallions. Two silver wine-holders contained pink heather, and there were three or four chrysanthemums and Roman hyacinths in the room.

The character of the room proclaimed the character of the man as clearly as the titles of the books on the two white shelves which ran round three of the walls. It was the room of an erudite man fastidious in the smallest things, the room of an artist profoundly interested in that eternal conflict which Balzac has designated as "the high rivalry between human toil and the work of Nature." The refinement of the room was the refinement of a scholarly mind and a pure taste. One felt instinctively that every article there had been lovingly collected. Nothing in the room suggested display or hinted at the upholsterer.

There was a small clock of tortoiseshell and gold on the mantelshelf, candles burning without shades in tall silver sticks, mirrors of exquisite workmanship on the walls, and on either side of the fire—with its pine logs giving out a pleasant scent—were ancient and beautiful flowered screens of papier maché. The general tone of the room—silver and grey—goldened by the satin-wood of the furniture and warmed by the colour of the chrysanthemums and heather, prepared one for the quiet, restful, and gentle personality of the man who had composed it and found his pleasure in it.

Rodwell was sitting beside the fire. His dark eyes gladdened as Beatrice entered the room and a smile relaxed the tension of his lips. He lowered the volume he was reading, and kept his face turned towards her.

"This makes up for Jevvers!" he exclaimed, and extended his hand.

She almost checked as she came to him. "Makes up for Jevvers?" she questioned, giving her hand.

"He has been here, and has only just left me," said Rodwell. "He sat in that chair; an ivory-handled umbrella rampant in his hand; so! For ten minutes I faced his whiskers."

She smiled, drawing a chair nearer to him. "But I came to hear about you," she said; "what is the matter, Richard?" She leaned forward, the arm with the muff resting across her knee, her eyes looking inquiringly into his.

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "Nature perhaps is making it easier for me to tear myself away from the Borough," he said, with an effort at cheerfulness. "Yes, I am going way. I made up my mind the day before yesterday; not without some grief, as you may imagine; and yesterday Nature knocked me down to tell me, as I suppose, that I must go soon and cheerfully, like a man fleeing from something that he dreads. Shall I tell you why I am going?"

"If it will not tire you," she said. Her voice concealed the pain she felt at this fresh confession of his restlessness. She had been waiting for years to see the disquiet go from his mind, and now here was further evidence that he had not yet freed himself, that he was still driven about by restlessness and uncertainty.

"I have been wanting to tell you," he answered; "I hoped you would come; it will do me good to tell you."

He was a man of thirty, somewhat above the middle height, dark, thin, square-shouldered, deep of voice and slow of speech. He had a foreign look, with his



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high cheekbones, his grey skin and his dark eyes. He reminded people of Robert Louis Stevenson. Suffering had relaxed to gentleness the natural austerity of his features. It was a strong face, even a hard face, but worn to gentleness. His eyes had that calm and reposeful expression under the broad temples which comes to those who have looked death in the face for many long days and through many sleepless nights. His nostrils were pinched, his mouth had a set look which only vanished when he smiled, his strong chin had the forward strain of one whose teeth have often been closed tightly to keep back the cry of pain. One looked at him and immediately felt how greatly he had suffered. And yet, perhaps it was difficult to say how much of the sweetness and gentleness of his expression came from pain, and how much of it from the natural refinement of his artist's mind.

His father, Colonel Rodwell, who commanded a regiment of Hussars in Egypt, had been a friend of Pat Haly. The two men hunted together in Ireland, and had ridden many steeple-chases together. Colonel Rodwell had been a handsome and noble-hearted man of whom no one ever spoke a disparaging word. To Haly he had been something of a god, the Phœbus Apollo of his youthful enthusiasm: and now this same regard and admiration was carried on by Halv's daughter for the youngest son of the great hero. Beatrice had known Richard from boyhood, and they had been like brother and sister. She loved him, and had always loved him, with the quiet patient assurance of her strong character. If he had asked her. if anybody had asked her, she would have said quite frankly that she loved him. For her, with all her

wealth and all her opportunities for distraction and worldly happiness, he was the supreme and only man in the universe. The love which began in childhood had grown with the rest of her being. To love him was a part of her religion; to watch over him and help him was the whole of her destiny. They had never approached the subject of love in all their perfectly intimate friendship. But she knew that he knew she loved him, and she knew better even than this that in his own way and as far as the stress of his circumstances allowed, he loved her.

How did he love her? He loved her first of all for the gentleness and tenderness of her voice and eyes. He loved her for her restfulness, the sense of quiet health and mental security which breathed from her like the scents of moorland and sea. He loved her for her freedom from the pettier tyrannies of convention and for the splendidly sane outlook of her vigorous mind. He loved her for her goodness, her purity, kindness, her strength, her illuminating common-sense.

If through all the hours of their friendship his mind had not lain wounded and bound under the tyranny of one over-mastering idea, he might have loved her in another fashion. He might have loved her with the energy and selfishness of a great passion, with that freedom and intensity and singleness of desire which only the unshackled lover can ever feel, and ever enjoy to the full of all its pleasure and the end of all its pain. But a man whose mind is not at rest cannot give his heart with the impetuous intolerance of a lover. A mind harried and perplexed, teased and fretted, a mind always preoccupied with the problem of its own being, can never find its happiness and delight in the absorption of love.



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Beatrice, with her Irish power of divination, knew that the love for which she waited was yet afar off, but she told herself that some day it would come to her. How, and exactly in what manner, she could not tell; she did not trouble herself to ask; but she never doubted in her serene and tranquil soul that one day this man would come to her, even as a child comes to its mother, and cry to her for the shelter of her heart. It was for this she was waiting; it was for this she was content to wait.

Rodwell, with his thin hands resting upon the book in his lap, looked away from her towards the fire and began to speak in his slow quiet way, while she leaned a little forward in her chair and watched him.

"You will be surprised at what I tell you," he said. After a pause, he added: "I am going to take up my vows of ordination. I have found myself. The discontented Evangelical is now the earnest High Churchman! The years in the wilderness have come to an end. Beatrice, I am sure of myself."

"I am so glad," she said, quietly, concealing without effort the sense of relief and triumph in her heart. She had been cast down at the thought of his going away. Now she learned, so suddenly that her heart was caught by the tidings, that the unrest was over, that the storm-tossed wanderer had come to himself, that her victory was at hand.

"I knew you would be glad," he said, looking at her. "We have not often talked about this matter, but I have always felt that you understood. It was the only comfort I had in my bad hours to know that you understood and sympathized. In our childhood, you remember, when I preached in my night-gown to you and to all the children and nurses we could muster,

I was always to be the priest and you were always to be my lady curate!"

"I knew it would come right, some day," she said. He raised his eyes and looked at her, quite frankly and lovingly. Then he slowly stretched out one of his thin hands to her, and she took it and held it. He did not guess what that action of his meant to her. "I used to hope it would come right." he said: "I never knew that it would. You see, Beatrice, it was not a matter of losing faith: I never lost my faith; it was a question of losing confidence in the Church. You see," he said, smiling, "I rather lost my head and with it my sense of proportion. I fancied myself more important than the Church. The Church wasn't quite big enough for me! I suppose I must have been suffering from my Balliol pride of Jowett's friendship: he loved me into a great conceit of myself. But even while I felt myself superior to the Church. I was teased by the conviction that the Church, whose doors I seemed to find closed against my conscience. offered me the only means in the world to do the work I wished to do. I was like Milton here "-he held up the little green-leather volume in his lap: "I was 'Churchouted.' After I had taken orders I seemed to feel-what are the words?"—he released her hand to open the book: "here it is: that 'he who would take orders must subscribe slave and take an oath withal, which unless he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either straight perjure, or split his faith.' But I perceived also that outside the Church there was no real opportunity to live the life I wished to live, the life of helping people to get the best out of existence. What was I to do? I was ordained; I was a minister of the Church: and vet intellectual honesty would not



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let me share in her life. Nothing else in the world offered me the smallest assurance of satisfaction. Art is a pleasure and a joy; but I doubt if even Leonardo. or Beethoven or Shakespeare, or even the unknown angel who carved the Venus there, ever were satisfied. ever felt at rest. And I wanted rest. To live without knowing what existence meant, to be a living creature without a definition of life, seemed to me a most unhappy state and manifestly irrational. With my books and music and pictures. I could be happy: but never satisfied, never at rest. Even when I came down here, three years ago, and found that I could work for the Mission without practising their religious rites, I was not satisfied. I got to love the Borough, as we all do," he said with a smile; "I found that I could help people in my own way, and I made many happy friendships among the men and women here, friendships which are a part of my education; but no: peace would not come, serenity would not come; I was always in a state of unrest." After a pause, he said, with a fire kindling in his dark eyes: "But it is all over now. I have made the surrender. I am not only at rest. I am supremely happy. You cannot tell how great is the satisfaction I feel in my sacrifice. It is great because the unrest was so terrible. Beatrice, I suffered frightfully."

"I knew," she said. Her eyes, while she was speaking, had studied his face with the look of a mother watching the countenance of an impulsive youth pouring out his confidence. "I wondered often whether I should speak and try to help you; I thought it better to wait. I am so glad you feel the wilderness is over. I never knew till now what it was that kept you from your work."

He sat up, and his face brightened. "You will laugh when you hear where I am going," he said. "The man who has most helped to show me that my unrest was only dissatisfaction with the Broad Church-manship of the Stanley and Maurice school, and who has given me enthusiasm for the deeper spirituality and the truer sacrifice of the more advanced school, has also provided me with a living. I am to commence vicar. No curating. My work here is to count, and a Bishop is already waiting to ordain me priest. Where do you think I go?"

"Tell me!"

"Almost as far from the Borough as I can get. To a little and neglected town facing the Atlantic; Bartownin-the-West, it is called; and curiously enough it is to that very part of the coast the doctor directed me only a few weeks ago if I wanted to live. At that time I did not want to live; now, I do." His eyes brightened again. "I am almost like a schoolboy in my desire to be off. I want to set to work. I shall get well in that fine air, and it will be an artist's life to recreate my kingdom by the sea. I am told that there is nothing in London to compare with it. For one thing, the notorious Champagne Shorder is its master mind. He owns it; he is actually my patron! A shabby, wicked, selfish, ignorant, and vulgar little place. They can be real bad, those people, when they want to be. The last parson was more set on providing for his family of thirteen children than on looking after his flock of three thousand souls-mostly goats, I fear; and there is only one dissenting place in the town, a Wesleyan Chapel ministered to by a poor patriarch, wholly uneducated and completely antiquated. I am asked to go there and lift up the town. It is a fine chance. I am really as keen as I can be."

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He spoke lightly to conceal his burning enthusiasm. "It seems like destiny," she said, "that you should go to the very place where the doctor has ordered you to go."

He smiled with amusement. "There is something else which makes me almost as superstitious as you," he replied. "Jevvers, when he heard where I was going, told me that he has a premium pupil in his office who comes from Bartown, in-the-West. A son of Champagne Shorder's solicitor and man of business. There's destiny for you!"

"Tell me about Mr. Jevvers," she said, glancing at the clock. "Why did he come here?"

"Ah, Jevvers!" he said, smiling again. "I never knew a guardian or a trustee or whatever he calls himself, so devoted to the interest of his client. He wrote to me this morning, and he called upon me half-an-hour ago, begging me with all the force of his sound commercial common-sense to dissuade you from attempting a hostel for factory girls. He is dead against it. He marshalled legions of figures and hurled them at me, until I was overthrown. Upon my word, I really think the scheme is too big for one person."

"Mr. Jevvers is a good man," said Beatrice, "but he thinks that goodness ought not to cost too much money."

"Yes," Rodwell replied, with a smile; "he regards Heaven as an awful possibility but a poor speculation. He doesn't believe in putting money into it. For a churchwarden and an honorary treasurer to I know not how many ecclesiastical societies, his attitude pleases me. What whiskers he has!"

Beatrice rose to go. "Well, perhaps, in this case

Mr. Jevvers will win," she said. "I shall come and

help you in Bartown-in-the-West?"

"Will you?" he cried. "Will you really, Beatrice?" He wished her to come. She was his only friend, and her great wealth would be of enormous help to him. But he had been too much concerned with the yielding of himself to the passionate sacrifice of the Church, to wonder very deeply whether she would help him.

She gave him her hand. "I am to be your lady-curate," she said. "I shall bring Christabel and all her wraps, and we will work for you."

"Good-bye," he said, turning to see her as she went to the door. "I never expected so great a stroke of fortune. It's splendid of you to come."

"Did you think I should forsake you?" she asked.

"To confess the truth," he said; "I rather hoped that you might come. But it seemed a little conceited."

"You should have known," she said. She paused, and then came back to him. "Your good news has made me forget something, I have brought you a little enamel," she added, drawing a package from her muff. "There. Add it to your collection, and get well quickly. Au revoir, Richard."

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CHAPTER III

INTRODUCING THE NOTORIOUS CHAMPAGNE SHORDER

ON a morning two or three days before that which was to bring Rodwell to Bartown-in-the-West, Beatrice Haly was riding on the windy downs high above the town. Riding was her one accomplishment, she had been taught on a pony in Kildare by Colonel Rodwell.

The sun was shining brightly, making great patches of silver on the sea, and larks were singing in a sky packed with huge clouds; the blustering wind which blew her hair about, and stung her cheeks with tingling cold, had the vigour of winter and the power of the sea.

She had made provision for a continuance of her charities in the Borough, and was now settling down to her new life by the sea. She had purchased an artist's house on the cliff, a cold barrack-like building of granite, called the Headland, which faced the Atlantic, and was approached from the town by a rough road leading through the sand dunes and climbing gradually up the side of the downs. From her bedroom windows she could see the spaced line of weather-beaten posts in the sea which marked the river bar, and on the further side of the river, the little harbour with its stumpy lighthouse, the slate roofs of the town and the stout grey

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tower of the church rising up from the sand towans behind. For the rest her view was all of the white crescent of sand curving round the bay and the broad glittering face of the Atlantic rolling far away to the mists of the horizon.

She was walking her horse towards the windy cliff, her eyes shining to the cloud-shadowed and sunpatched sea, and her thoughts all of confidence and hope, when she heard the sound of hoofs coming up behind her, and, turning her head, saw riding towards her a wild-looking man on a big-boned horse. As she turned her head, her own horse plunged a little to one side and got his head round to take stock of the new-comer.

"A good seat, by thunder!" shouted the wild-looking man. "You never shifted half an inch. Good mornin', Miss Haly. The top of the mornin' to you!" He took off his hat and laughed cheerfully. She had taken him at first for a farmer, but though his enunciation was boisterous, his voice declared a gentler education. He was a big broad-faced, young-looking but old-fashioned man, with a high complexion and round hazel eyes, set far apart. His light hair was rather long and curly, he had fair mutton-chop whiskers, and the absence of moustache emphasized the joviality and good temper of his mouth. He did not look more than thirty, and had the appearance of a generous and easy living yeoman with a taste for horseflesh.

He wore a pair of flannel trousers, which riding had rolled up almost to his bare knees, a sand-coloured Norfolk jacket, and a dark blue muffler tied round his neck. On his head, pulled well down over his eyes and ears, was a soft tweed hat, its narrow and crumpled

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brim turned downward. He wore no gloves, and carried in his hand a switch cut from the hedges.

She noticed that he was riding with an unpadded saddle, and used only a snaffle; she also noticed that he sat his horse extremely well and appeared to have very good hands.

"Come and open your horse's bellows," he said, turning his big grey from the sea. "There's no ceremony up here. My name's Shorder. Those are my Works down in the town. I hunt the hounds, and I'm not ashamed to say that no man in the world handles more bag foxes than I do. You're Miss Haly from somewhere up along. Glad to meet you. Let's see what your horse is worth. It looks a clipper. I'm givin' you four stone if I'm givin' you a pound. As far as that bank just as hard as ever you can! Ready?"

She smiled, and accepted his challenge. Away they went. Shorder, standing in his stirrups and leaning forward, jumped well away from her, and looked back over his shoulder with a smile of good humour. Beatrice pressed her horse with leg and whip, and answered her challenger's smile. Her big black hunter, who could change legs on a double as quick as any horse in Leicestershire, and had a turn of speed famous all over the Midlands, soon got into his splendid stride and cracking his nostrils caught the thundering grey and sailed easily past the astonished Shorder.

"What a horse!" he exclaimed, with an oath of fervent admiration.

The gallop excited Beatrice. The stone bank tempted her. "We must teach this gentleman who deals in bag foxes his manners," she smiled. "Come Marco," she added, and steadied her horse for the jump.

It was a stone bank, well over four feet high, with

gorse bushes and ferns in front of it, with a few stunted bushes growing here and there on top of it, and with rather a nasty slope into arable land on the farther side. The horse had never hunted in a stonewall country, and had none of the tricks of a stonewall jumper; finding himself steadied he gathered up his great strength, took off when she asked him, sprang with his legs well tucked under him, and cleared the wall and landed on the other side with all the will in the world to go on to another.

Shorder was astonished at seeing Beatrice jump this wall, but with a shout of "Forrard we go!" he set his old grey at it, lifted him over, and came a most unwholesome cropper on the other side. He was on his feet at once, laughing all over his face, and was putting his girths right and his saddle straight almost as soon as Beatrice had seen him fall. She noticed that a locket hanging by a chain had been forced out from under his muffler.

"It's my land; it don't matter," he laughed, brushing the earth from his knees. Then he said, looking at Marco: "You've got a horse there! By Jupiter, you'll see the tail of the hounds in this country from find to kill. It was the horse beat me, mind. You're a game rider, but it was the horse beat me. When you're laid up, I'll borrow him and keep him fit for you! He'll carry me right enough. What does he stand, sixteen one and a half?" He vaulted very lightly into the saddle, and pointed to the wall. "Jump it!" he laughed.

"Not from this side," she answered; "is there a gate?"

He discovered the locket, and thrust it quickly out of sight.



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"I'll show you the way back," he said; and trotted forward alongside of the bank. Presently he pulled up. "Follow me!" he called to her, laughing. There was a flight of four stone steps sticking out of the bank. He took his horse to them, and using only his legs, got the grey to walk solemnly up the steps until it could scramble on to the bank, when he pulled it up, and looked back and down at her.

"What do you think of that?" he demanded.

"You carry me back to Hengler's Circus," she replied, with a smile.

"By gum, madam, you'll find it useful in this country if you can ever do the same!"

She smiled, and trotted on to a gate in the distance. To her astonishment the Master trotted after her on top of the bank, making his horse hop over the bushes that got in his way. She could hear the grey's hoofs slipping on the stone.

"You'll come off," she called.

"Why not?" he laughed; and at that moment the horse slipped and went bungling down on the other side.

She heard him laughing in his big boisterous manner. When she reached the gate he was almost there, and neither man nor grey seemed much the worse for their second fall.

"I'm glad you've found out this down," he said to her. "It's one of the best bits in the country. I call it my church. I come here every mornin', go for a gallop, say my prayers, and repent of my sins. I can't stand any other church. Can you? We've got a new parson comin' here this week; a chap from London."

"A friend of mine," she said.

"Sorry," he laughed. "But what does it matter?

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You don't mind a man sayin' what he likes? My view of parsons is an old-fashioned one. I say of a parson that if he isn't a fool, he's a rogue; if he's a fool he bores me: if he's a rogue I want to kick him. Now, which is your friend, Miss Haly?"

"Neither," she answered. "You must let him bring you round to a nicer view of parsons."

"Can he ride a horse, can he use the gloves, can he take his bottle like a man?" cried Shorder, laughing. "Can he go all night on bare hands and knees over ice and snow after wild duck? Can he break a wild colt and shoe a savage one? Can he sail a cockle shell of a boat through a tempest? Can he swim a mile in a storm? Can he lift a horse like mine over a wall like vonder? Lord have mercy on us, a man's got a fine cheek to get up and talk to men, unless he can live like a man. I'll bet a monkey he wears an overcoat in winter, and gloves! I'll bet a monkey he does. To blazes with parsons! What do we want with 'em? Do they know more than we do about this world? No. Do they know more than we know about the next world? No. A rat's tail for parsons! The God who made a horse doesn't want anything to do with parsons, you bet your life for it. There's more of God for me in a lion or a great-hearted salmon, or a big busting horse like yours than there is in all the parsons unhung. Look at this town. A lot of snivelling, lily-livered, chicken-hearted, mug-faced stick-inthe-muds! No good, any of 'em. When I turn out a fox, who follows? Only my own servants, and they ride so bad I don't mount 'em on anythin' but donkeys! There's about three men in my Works can box. The town's rotten. England's rotten. Religion's playin' Old Harry with everythin'. Where do you find men

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now like John Mytton, old Astley, Fred Burnaby, and Claude de Crespigny? Where are they? Why, religion's knocked the wind out of 'em."

He said all this earnestly, but never angrily; all the time he was speaking there was laughter in his eyes and his face beamed with good-nature. Beatrice felt a pity for the narrowness of his outlook, but no aversion from the man himself. He interested her. She thought she could understand his point of view. She felt a desire to influence his mind, and soften his heart. His appeal to her was immediate and insistent. "You have got something to learn from the new parson," she said, quietly.

"I should like to know what it is," he laughed back. "I'm not a fool, Miss Haly. Far from it. I learnt nothin' at Rugby, but I caught up with Oxford and passed England at Heidelberg. Ah! Those Germans have got heads to 'em. I learnt somethin' in Germany. I'll prove to your parson, if he's an honest fellow, that the soul can't exist. I'll prove it. Yes: it's to be proved. No theological metaphysics for me. knock him down with physiology." He burst out laughing, and rubbed a hand across his eves. I'm glad your parson is comin', if he brought you down. You're one of the right kind. You're young yet; you'll grow out of the churchy-churchy humbug. down will take all that out of your mind. I'll bring a horse up to-morrow that will lead you a mile and a half; and I'll show you a piece of water down in the valley that will make that fine-boned black of yours cock his ears for a month of Sundays. But I wish you were a man. I want some one to box with me. If I don't fight a lot I get layin' about, which is bad for me." His face hardened for a moment. "It makes me lazy if I don't get a real noisy bout with the gloves, and a gallop with some devil in it. You and I'll have many a gallop." He laughed and pressed his horse away from her. "Good-bye for the present," he said. "I must go down to the Works now. Look in some day and see us forging a bit of good steel for the Jews on the Rand. I make some stuff down in those Works." He lifted his hat, waved it to her, and then cantering his horse broke suddenly into a wild gallop and went thundering out of sight down the side of the hill.

When Beatrice entered the house from her ride she found Miss Christabel Taylor in the drawing-room. The old lady was lying on an invalid sofa by the side of the fire, with a white shawl over her shoulders and a black shawl across her knees. She was reading the Prayer Book, and at the side of the sofa lay a newspaper. There was a small table within reach of her hand, and on this table were the usual accessories of her daily existence, to wit, a green bottle of lavender salts, two little bottles of tabloids, a silver vinaigrette, a spectacle case, a folded pocket handkerchief, a bottle of eau-de-cologne, and four or five large books of devotion in each of which was a little ivory barrel, hanging from the top strung with blue ribbon markers which stuck out from the bottom.

Miss Taylor looked up over her spectacles as Beatrice entered, and lowered her big Prayer Book. "My dear Beatrice," she said, in her low ghostly voice, "would you believe it, that dreadful Mrs. Arthur Blane was at the Duchess of Winchester's reception last night?"

Beatrice smiled. "Where did you see that?" she asked. "In the Psalms?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Christabel, blinking her eyelids. "There is comfort for all life's wickedness in the Psalms. I wish you read them more often, my dear. I'm reading the first Psalm for this morning, Psalm sixty-two." She raised the Prayer Book from her lap. "Listen Beatrice. 'As for the children of men, they are but vanity: the children of men are deceitful upon the weights, they are altogether lighter than vanity itself. O trust not in wrong and robbery, give not yourselves unto vanity: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.' How good and true that is, my dear!" she exclaimed, lowering the book once more to her lap.

Beatrice agreed with her.

"But, you know, Beatrice, to be quite serious," continued Miss Taylor, removing her spectacles, and settling herself down for a comfortable conversation; "it really is a monstrous thing that such a woman as that Mrs. Arthur Blane should be received by people like the Winchesters. I cannot understand it. She wore pale blue tulle embroidered with pink and crystals, bands of radium silk on the skirt, and her ornaments were turquoise and diamonds. It seems to me really as if Society had ceased to pay the smallest respect to the proprieties. Here is a woman notoriously——"

Beatrice interrupted her. "That cushion is not quite comfortable for your back; let me arrange it for you. There, that is better. And now it is time for your milk." She went to the fireplace and rang the bell.

"The Duchess," said Christabel, "wore orchid chiffon velvet trimmed with chinchilla, and hanging sleeves and draperies of Brussels lace. They say she literally blazed with diamonds."

"She must have looked very nice," Beatrice answered.

"But, my dear, she's no figure at all, no figure at all," said Miss Taylor. "A woman with such a figure

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in my day would have been passed over. It is wonderful how Society is revolutionizing all one's old ideas. A girl had to be very handsome and very distingué in my day to attract admiration. I remember a girl in Tunbridge Wells, General Stickell's daughter; she was perfectly lovely in face, but her figure was atrocious and she had no presence. What was the consequence? She waited for five years and married a curate."

Beatrice occasionally teased her companion for the startling incongruity of her fixed beliefs, but more often she patiently heard the old body out. It was a jest among her friends that Beatrice employed Christabel in order to wait upon her. Beatrice was for ever attending to the old lady's cushions and shawls, seeing that she had her milk at the stated hours, giving her an arm across the hall, reading to her, playing cribbage with her, listening to her gossip, and doing all through the day twenty little nameless things which tended to the comfort and the well-being of the old governess.

And dear Christabel took all this service from her employer as a meet and due tribute to her age, her knowledge of the world, and her physical infirmities. She was inclined to regard Beatrice still as her pupil. She often corrected her in little matters, employed a didactic note in her conversation, assumed always omniscience in her own case and an almost total ignorance in the case of Beatrice. When Beatrice stuck to her guns, which she did very often but always with the most charming good-humour, Christabel would throw up her eyes and exclaim tolerantly, "Well, there; girls will be girls, I suppose; and wilfulness is natural to the young and inexperienced; but really, Beatrice, for a girl of your age——"

We need hardly tell the intelligent reader that by a

lady who found her chief interest, on the verge of the grave, in the occupations and gossip of fashionable society, a visit of indefinite length to Bartown-in-the-West was regarded with the most distinct and definite disapprobation. However, Miss Taylor's original feelings in this matter were greatly mollified by no other a person than that incorrigible roysterer Tom Shorder, who was said to drink a bottle of champagne at seven o'clock in the morning. No sooner had Shorder made his first entrance on the scene than he espied in Christabel a creature to be quizzed to the top of her bent, and he seized with the greatest alacrity in the world on this admirable opportunity for delighting his sense of the ridiculous.

"You're ill!" he cried, even before he had taken her hand. "My word, but you are ill, and no mistake about it. Why, it's written in your face. A blind man could see it." He sat down in a chair beside her, his back to Beatrice, and leaned forward with the utmost concern for Christabel's terrible sufferings.

"I am a great sufferer, Mr. Shorder," said the old lady; "but I endeavour as far as I am able to practise resignation."

"You needn't tell me," he murmured with admiration.

"We must all bow," said Christabel, taking her vinaigrette, "to the Heavenly Will."

"If we don't," said Shorder, "we're done for."

Miss Taylor, anxious for social conversation, began to say that she had known of Mr. Shorder's mother, Lady Emily Shorder; but the wicked son would not take up that line of conversation.

He inquired most intelligently after Miss Taylor's symptoms, and begged her to tell him what medicines

she was in the habit of taking for her innumerable complaints. Into that painful catalogue he broke presently with advice of his own.

"What you want, my dear lady," said he, "is a devilled biscuit at night. Two devilled biscuits. Three devilled biscuits. I go so far as to say four devilled biscuits. Recipe: Take any dry biscuit, fry in butter for seven minutes, pepper liberally with cayenne, re-butter, and serve blazing hot. To be washed down with a glass of dry champagne before going to bed."

Miss Taylor requested Beatrice to remember what Mr. Shorder had so kindly recommended, for her memory she said, was not what it was in her young days.

"I warrant it wasn't always so good then as some of your admirers would have wished!" exclaimed Shorder, wagging his head. "My word, but you led some of 'em a pretty dance, I'll bet my life. What? Don't tell me! Oh, Miss Taylor! Oh, Miss Taylor! How many partners went searchin' for you through those crowded ball-rooms, and only found you at the end of their dances comfortably reposin' behind a forest of palms with young Epaulettes beguilin' your tedium? I know! My dear lady, it's in your eyes for all the world to see. Those dark eyes with the arched brows—What! They can look innocent enough, and pious enough; yes, by George; but they interfered with many a poor beggar's breakfast or my name isn't Tom Shorder."

Christabel was delighted. She told Mr. Shorder that he was a wicked man, and that he had no business to go recalling a past long since repented of and put aside for more solemn things. Besides, no man had

ever dared to speak to her as he was speaking then. It was very bold of him, very naughty, and very, very unkind.

He laughed and rallied her again. "Oh, those polkas and valses in Cheltenham!" he exclaimed.

"Tunbridge Wells," she corrected.

"Tunbridge Wells!" he cried, aghast. "Oh, my eye! Tunbridge Wells! As bad as that, was it? Well, I'm monkeyed. Why, Tunbridge Wells was one of the most brilliant, darin', reckless, and elegant centres of flirtation in the whole kingdom."

"And yet, you know, Mr. Shorder," said the lady, "I really think Society is a great deal worse now than ever it was in my young days. It has lost its brilliance, there is no repartee and epigram now; it is all rowdyism; girls do things nowadays which we should never have dreamed of doing in my time. Why, only the other day I heard of couples at Lady Blembury's ball going off between the dances in hansom cabs for a drive round the Park! Can you imagine such a thing? It's indecent. It's positively indecent."

"The truth is," said Mr. Shorder, "Society is going the way of the Gadarene swine. If people aren't very careful, there'll be a revolution."

"My own most assured conviction!" exclaimed Christabel eagerly, flashing a look at Beatrice, which meant that she had always said the same thing herself. "The masses are getting out of hand. They read all about Society in the halfpenny papers, and they know the wickedness of it. Is it to be wondered, then, if they rise in their thousands? I feel convinced, Mr. Shorder, that a day of reckoning is at hand."

"Rise in their thousands!" cried Shorder. "No,

ma'am, in their millions. Millions! Millions! Make no mistake about it!" He stopped, and bending down to her whispered: "There's one comfort, you're safer here than in London."

This gave Miss Taylor an opportunity for which she had been waiting ever since her advent at the Headland. She wished to know whether there were any fashionable people in the neighbourhood, and what quality of guests she might expect to call at the Headland.

"But I dare say it is just as bad here," she cried, shaking a sorrowful head. "I dare say the educated classes in this part of the world are addicted to Bridge and spend their lives in frivolity. Is that so, Mr. Shorder?"

"The leading members of Society in this part of the world," answered Shorder, "are a family of the name of Colver. He's my man of business. His daughters are real fashionable. They've been to Lucerne. The old lady wears bonnets which are simply tremendous, and devotes her life to making her daughters go off before age does the trick for her in another fashion. Next to them in the social scale comes Mr. Richard Vick and the Honourable Mrs. Vick. Dick Vick—they call him here D.V.—which I don't approve of, was huntsman to that mad old fellow. Lord Ashill up in Yorkshire who went broke ten years ago. He ran away with the old chap's eldest daughter, Selina, and Selina lives here in one of my cottages, looking after poultry and never going out of doors; and D.V. who thrashes her about once a week lives down at the Angel all day, drinking gin and playing billiards with old Joe Blund the doctor. I'm sorry for Selina. She looks a decent sort. But

she never goes out of doors, and she won't receive visitors."

"I remember the case perfectly well," said Miss Taylor. "You are too young to remember it, Beatrice. It was fifteen years ago, I think. It was in all the

papers at the time. A terrible exposé."

"Well, there's Mrs. Vick livin' with one servant in a cottage of mine, and any mornin' in the week you can see her from the down here, walkin' about the yard behind the cottage in a boatman's jersey and a straw hat tilted over her nose, feedin' the poultry. D.V., if you want to see him, you'll find in the Angel playing billiards with old Joe Blund, or goin' odd man out for drinks with a lot of minin' students at the bar."

"But," exclaimed the horrified and alarmed Miss Taylor, "is Dr. Blund the only medical man in this town? Am I to send to a public house when one of my attacks come on? It is perfectly preposterous. It's absurd. It is monstrous. Beatrice, my dear, we must go back to London."

"Be calm, dear lady," said the tactful Shorder.
"There's another pill merchant in the place; a real slap-bang affair he is. In fact, it's the popularity of the new man that has done old Joe in the eye. The new man, Simpson by name, tootles about the country in a motor-car, and the motor-car has done the trick for old Joe Blund. People don't believe in gigs any longer. For the last five years or more Blund's practice has gone to the devil: you know, what I mean, gone to the bad. The poor old boy has hardly got a patient left. It has broke his heart. He's drownin' his sorrow in brandy and water."

Mr. Shorder had hardly concluded this sentence

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when the door opened and a servant announced Mrs. Blund. Miss Taylor instantly drew herself up, assumed her most formidable expression, and desired Mr. Shorder to give her the lavender salts. Beatrice went forward to greet and welcome her visitor, with a most kindly hospitality of manner.

The tale of Mrs. Blund's life was told in her appearance. She was a little clear-eyed indomitable woman, carrying herself almost with effrontery, and speaking in a fashion which argued great assurance of her position in the world. Her bonnet was old, her jacket was worn, and her skirt had lost years ago its graceful folds. Yet she contrived by a ribbon round her throat and a poor lace throw-over across her shoulders to present a prosperous appearance to the world. But her hands, in their faded gloves, were never still; and the clear-skin of her face, strangely free from wrinkles, twitched nervously as she talked. She talked too much; she was over-anxious to appear at ease and make an impression.

Beatrice was very kind to her, and Shorder, sitting beside Christabel, watched the young hostess as she listened with charming and ministering repose to the garrulity of her poor little shabby visitor.

"Yes, it's very healthy here," Mrs. Blund was saying. "The air is wonderfully good. Dr. Blund says that in all his experience he has never got his patients well so quickly, as he has done since we've been here. He ought to know," she said, with a little tolerant smile. "He took a very distinguished degree at the hospital, and before we came here, twenty years ago now, he had one of the most important practices in all Wimbledon." Her eyes went from Beatrice to Miss Taylor. "Dr. Blund says," she

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declared, emphatically, "that he would undertake to get the most hopeless invalid perfectly well here in six months. You see, he doesn't believe in these new ideas of the younger school, always wanting to use the knife—horrible, isn't it?—he believes in medicine and diet. Medicine and diet. That is what Dr. Blund believes in. But there, I mustn't say any more; for it's like talking shop, isn't it; I do abominate that. It's so vulgar, isn't it?" Then she turned and rattled away to Champagne Shorder about the Works, and the people in the place, just as if she regarded him as one of her closest friends and a man perfectly able to bear out every word she had said concerning Dr. Blund.

"I hear, Miss Haly," she continued, turning suddenly to Beatrice, "that you are a friend of the new clergyman who is coming to us, Mr. Rodwell?"

"Yes, he is one of our oldest friends."

"Well, I hope he will succeed here, I'm sure," said Mrs. Blund. "I shall be only too glad to do anything I can. It's not the best of towns for a clergyman to work in, is it, Mr. Shorder? The moral tone is not what some of us would wish it to be, not by a very long way. But I really think the last clergyman was greatly responsible for that. He neglected the town dreadfully. Ah!" she exclaimed, catching sight of Miss Taylor's devotional books, "I fear that when the secrets of all are laid bare, our last clergyman will have a lot to answer for."

"Poor old Nat Bustard!" said Shorder with a laugh. "Why, he had thirteen children to look after! Don't be too hard on him, Mrs. Joe. Give the old bird a chance. I dare say he'll squeeze himself in with the sheep somehow when it comes to the sizing

up. He'll have all his thirteen to push him, anywav."

"That's quite true about the children," said Mrs. Blund; "and though I don't hold with celibacy, I must say that I think for a clergyman to have a large family is a great drawback to any parish. I don't know whether the new clergyman is high or low, Miss Haly, but I hear that he is neither married nor engaged, which rather looks as if he held by celibacy for the clergy—which is decidedly high."

"He is not married, and not engaged," Beatrice answered. Shorder looked hard at her, and then turned with his honest open eyes to Miss Taylor, who smiled at him, as much as to say, "Ah, you and I understand these things!"

"Is he extreme in his views?" inquired Mrs. Blund indifferently, glancing at the clock.

"No: not extreme," replied Beatrice.

"Low Church?"

"No; not low," Beatrice answered. "I think he is the average English clergyman."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Mrs. Blund, rising. "I like a clergyman who leans to no parties, and who preaches the Gospel historically. That is what we want, here in the dissenting West. We want the sense of history, the attitude of mind which is historically balanced between extremes. Mr. Rodwell will evidently be an acquisition."

When she had gone Shorder leaned back in his chair, smote his hands, and laughed silently till the tears came into his eyes.

"Why do you laugh?" Beatrice inquired, studying the giant with her grave eyes.

"I call that woman an impudent impostor," said

Christabel, with decision, drawing the stopper from her lavender salts.

"Why do I laugh?" asked Shorder. "Why, because cheek always does make me laugh. I laugh at a bishop in his impertinent gaiters. I laugh at a masher in his squeezed collar. I laugh at every mortal who haw-demmes and sticks his little nose in the air, and trots about under the sky different from all the rest of us. Didn't you see how that woman was letting on about old Joe Blund? Didn't you see how she was playing the Church trick because of your friend the new parson? She take an interest in the Church; she believe in old Joe! But there, let it be! I'm a rough man of the moors. I'm not fit for drawin'-rooms. Why, it was as much as I could do to keep myself from crying out against the woman while she was here holdin' forth!"

Beatrice kept her grave eyes upon him, and when he made an end of what he was saying, he saw that she was quietly judging him and appraising him, perhaps even pitying him.

"I wonder," she said, "that you did not feel sorry

for her."

"Sorry for her! No. I'm never sorry for humbug."

"Not for brave humbug?"

"How, brave?"

Beatrice seemed surprised at his density. "Surely," she said, "that poor woman was fighting a desperate battle for her husband. The motor-car is against her. Her only weapon is her woman's courage. She has got to pretend that things aren't what they are. I also think," she added, with slow emphasis, "that in her heart she may nurse the great hope that with

new patients Dr. Blund might regain his self-respect and make a fresh start."

Shorder was silent.

"I am rather sorry you did not feel for her," said Beatrice, steadily. "I should have thought you would have felt sorry for her."

"So I do in a way," answered Shorder. "But," he added, with a laugh, "I'm the sworn enemy of sentiment. I can't help it. It's my nature. What! is old Joe Blund to be bolstered up as a respectable medical man, just because his wife is a pathetic little drudge of a thing? No. Nature works on other lines. Nature downs a fellow like Blund: ah, and kicks him when he's down, into the bargain. I go by nature. There's no dispute among the learned gents about nature's laws. Look here. Miss Halv: I sav that every man nature knocks out, deserves to be knocked out. And what's more, I say that every man picked up from the gutter is an unfair burden on those who march fit and strong. I'm all for the pillchap in his motor-car. He knows his job; he keeps himself fit: he works. Why should another man get his reward? What do you say, Miss Taylor?"

"I agree with the substance of your remarks," replied the invalid. "I remember very well that in Tunbridge Wells, there was a medical man who behaved something after the manner of this dreadful Dr. Blund. What was the result? He was cut, properly cut, by everybody in Society."

Beatrice did not take her eyes from Shorder's face while Christabel was speaking. He came back to her eyes, saw that she was still studying him, and got up from his chair with a rough laugh, preparing to take his leave.

"It's no use, Miss Haly, to try and convert me to sentimental views of life," he said, facing her.

"I don't despair of you," she smiled.

"Well, look here," he said, "when you're ill, if you send for old Joe Blund I'll take a kinder view of him."

Beatrice turned to Christabel. "I am never ill," she said, smiling, "but I am sure Miss Taylor will consult Dr. Blund. She is kindness itself."

"I won't have him inside the door!" cried the invalid, with convalescent energy. "I won't have him near me! The idea of such a thing. A man smelling of brandy and water, and probably intoxicated, daring to come near me? I never heard of such a thing."

Shorder and Beatrice laughed together; he boisterously as was his wont; she quietly, almost without sound.

"But I'm horrified altogether," said Miss Taylor. "The account you give of Society here is deplorable, Mr. Shorder. It seems to me that the whole town is benighted. One might be living in the dark ages—Doesn't Lady Emily find it——"

"I don't suppose there's a wickeder little hole in all England," laughed Shorder, interrupting her. "My mother never comes near it. It's the worst town I ever lived in. 'Pon my soul, it is. We've got two brothers here, John and Frank Farnaby, who are the fastest men in England. Your parson friend, Miss Haly, will find his work cut out for him, I give you my word for it. I shall watch him with interest. A celibate, is he? Well, he won't have too much time even as a bachelor to get hold of this little tin-pot inferno. It'll take him all his time to save Joe Blund from delirium tremens. And then he'll have the

minin' students to deal with. He'll be real lucky if they don't crack his head for him, some of 'em."

"He will have you to help him."

"I!" cried Shorder.

"You will like him very much."

Shorder turned to Christabel and winked his eye, which quite astonished that good lady. No one had winked at her for forty years. It was only as the son of Lady Emily that she put up with it. "You and I, Miss Taylor," he said; "are pretty particular about the parsons we take up with, aren't we? Just you tell me, now—I'll take your word and go by it—What kind of a parson is this young Rodwell?"

"I consider him to be," replied Christabel, "a man of promise, as he is undoubtedly a gentleman by birth and an Oxford man; but I think he is a little too much inclined, perhaps, to dwell upon himself."

"Like a broody hen!" said Shorder. "I know the sort. You've hit him off in a single phrase. Miss Taylor you're a genius! One of the moody Prince of Denmark kind of fellows. I know 'em. But there's another matter," he said, and then imitating the manner of Mrs. Blund, he inquired:—"Is his mind really and truly historically balanced between extremes?"

He did not wait for an answer, but bursting with laughter shook Miss Taylor by the hand, told her to be sure and eat devilled biscuits and not send for Dr. Blund when she had an attack; and then, merely touching Beatrice's fingers, he went from the room laughing and chuckling in the greatest good humour.

That very afternoon the news was all over Bartownin-the-West, that Champagne Shorder was head over heels in love with the rich girl who had taken the

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Headland. It got even to the Hangers where Shorder lived. One of the footmen coming across Mr. Shorder's man, the Spaniard Pedro Almeida, mentioned the gossip to him, and asked him if he thought it were true.

Pedro only smiled.

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CHAPTER IV

THE VICAR ARRIVES

RODWELL was met at the station on a grey and windy afternoon in March by Pilkin, the sexton, clerk, and vicarage gardener, who introduced himself to his new master with a hearty shake of his hand in this fashion. "So you're Mr. Rodwell, are you? Well, glad to see you. We've had an awful fool of a fellow for a locum tenens. My name's Mr. Pilkin. You've heard of me from the Bishop, I daresay."

Mr. Pilkin was damaged in one leg, which trailed a little behind the other, and looked as if at some period of its existence it had been employed as a cockscrew, and after having broken more necks of bottles than it had drawn corks, had finally been thrown away and picked up by Pilkin as a curiosity. His head was covered by thick curly iron-grey hair; and his squat deep-wrinkled face with its pudgy nose, its dark brown twinkling eyes, and its thick humorous lips, was fringed with this same vigorous iron-grey hair which ran past his ears and under his chin like a great hairy letter U. Inside this stubborn fringe of grey the old fellow's face looked like a gnarled bole on an elm tree.

"Yes, I'm very well-known to the Bishop," he

went on, as they walked towards the luggage van. "I'm a kind of a what you might call a Handy Man to the Established Church of England. I do a little bit of everything. Choirmaster; Sunday School teacher; sekketairy to the Temperance Society, and that don't give me much work; and when the parson's throat is a bit dicky I read the lessons. Yes, I do a lot for the Church of England. My son and me make all the coffins as required, and I dig the graves with my sound foot; for, you must know, I've got one leg in the grave already myself "-here he dug the vicar playfully in the ribs with his elbow, clucking in his throat at the rich jest-"and when there's company at the vicarage," he continued, "why, I wait at the table and put people at their ease; combining, as you may say, the grave with the gay. Oh, I see a tidy bit of life. I do!" he exclaimed. "I uses my eyes as much as most. I aren't only pulling a rope when I'm ringing the church bell, nor yet only turning up the earth when I'm digging pertaters or planting human flesh for the Resurrection." Here again the elbow came into play. "Mr. Pilkin's no fool, for all he do go dot-and-carryone!"

Rodwell's baggage was stacked upon a wheelbarrow, and Pilkin proceeded to wheel it through the wind-blown town. Every now and then he would set down the barrow, seat himself upon one of the handles, and while he "fetched his wind" explain to the new vicar some particular about the town.

"You see that girl walking with that young fellow over there," he said, on one occasion, pointing to a pretty girl stooping her head to the wind, holding on her hat, and trying to get her skirt disentangled from

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her legs. "That's Susie Duck, that is. One of nine. Her father's Captain Duck what lives up in Sunbeam Terrace. Now I ask you, What business has one of nine, and the daughter of a retired mine captain, what business has she to be walking about the streets in company with the harum-scarum son of a chapel minister. That's young Godfrey Eyre that is—wants to be a gentleman he does; learning mining up at the College, and hanging about the streets with Susie. Ah, there'll be trouble there; you mark my word for it. And she's not the only one; not by a long chalk, she isn't. A lot of young harum-scarum devils, those mining students. Just you wait till you go through the High Street. You'll see!"

The High Street was a long row of shabby grey houses facing the wall which ran beside the river. The road and pavement and windows and doorsills were filled with fine sand which immediately got into Rodwell's eyes and mouth. In this deplorable street he saw that a great number of the shop windows were broken. The effect of these shattered panes in the dilapidated sand-blown street was to give it an air of dreadful depravity. It looked like a town which had just finished but had not yet recovered from some gross and horrible saturnalia.

"That's what the young gentlemen done last night," said Pilkin, setting down his barrow again, and surveying the scene with the air of one who had himself most accurately prophesied the ruin. "They come home last night three sheets in the wind from a football match, and driving through the town in a brake at midnight, singing and shrieking at the tops of their voices, they lets fly with their empty beer bottles and smashes pretty near every bit of plate-

glass in Bartown. That's what they call having a lark. The young devils!"

"Where is the Mining College?" asked Rodwell. "Oh, you needn't worry yourself about that," replied Pilkin, taking up his barrow. "It's in the next town to this, and God be praised for it; but two or three of 'em has lodgings here: that young Evre what you saw walking with Susie Duck lives with his father and mother, but he's always about the streets, and then some of 'em are very fond of coming over here to the Angel for a booze at night. I'll show you the Angel. It's in the square, at the end of this street, just beside Shorder's Engineering Works. You've heard of Shorder, I daresay. Champagne Shorder they call him; and he's a beauty, I tell you. I've seen him fox-hunting at midnight in his pyjammers, I have, shouting so as you never heard in all your life, and jumping over great stone walls and swimming his horse across the river, just as if he was a madman, which I reckon he is. Ah, now that's the Angel: over there in the centre. That old fellow leaning against the porch is one of our doctors, Dr. Blund they call him, and he's another beauty, and no mistake. There's more than one man in this town has kicked the doctor out of his house, and serve the old devil right, too."

Rodwell saw in this dirty and dilapidated square, where the ground was blackened with coal dust from its proximity to Shorder's Works, a building of broken yellow stucco with a mouldering porch jutting over the pavement, across whose front was written in stained black letters *The Angel*. Dr. Blund was leaning one of his humped shoulders against the porch, with his hands in his trousers' pockets; he was a

hairy, purple-faced, fat-shouldered man of middlelife, with a shabby old billycock hat pulled angrily over his eyes. His moustache and beard were of iron-grey; his attitude denoted a moody enmity towards the world and a sulky contempt for what people might think of him. At his feet coal dust and sand were blown with scraps of dirty paper in chattering eddies made by the wind.

The heart of Richard Rodwell sank within him as he crossed this dreary square, and he recalled with the most poignant regret the cheerful poverty and the courageous struggle of the genuine cockneys in the Borough. He was glad when Pilkin pointed him down a narrow lane entitled Church Path, and told him that if he went to the end, mounted the steps, passed through a lych gate, and crossed a field it would bring him to the church and the vicarage. These directions Pilkin gave the new vicar in the manner of one instructing a child.

"Now, don't you go and make any mistake, mind," he said. "Keep straight on across the field, and at the top of it you'll see the church as big as a haystack."

Rodwell went down the narrow passage which seemed to enjoy an immunity from the wind but none from certain chemical smells which reminded him a little of the Borough, and mounting the granite steps at the end of it, passed through the gate, and came out into the wind again. As he breasted the hill he let his gaze rest for a few minutes on the church and the vicarage ahead of him; and then, pausing for breath, with his hand to his hat brim, turned about and looked back at the town below.

He could see the cinder-trodden path of the wharf, with a crane hanging like a giant's fishing rod above

the river; he could see, farther along, how the river swelled and passed out between the harbour on one side and the broken sandhills on the other, to the turbulent grey and white of the sea, where a collier was pitching in the waves. He saw the railway lines, following the river, and a stone bridge across the river where it narrowed at the end of the town. From thin pipes in the slate and corrugated-iron roofs of Shorder's Works little spirts of steam shot noisily into the air, and one of the tall chimneys was letting fine black smoke drift out upon the racing wind. Only the roofs of the town were to be seen, roofs of small slate almost brown-green in colour, splashed over with and embedded in concrete, so that they looked like a cluster of limpets clinging to granite rocks.

On the opposite side of the river, high up on the splendid cliff, he recognized from Beatrice's description of it, the Headland, standing solitary and strong against the sky line. To his right, just above the roofs of the town, on the slope of the hill, he saw a small terrace of white houses with a flagstaff in front, its halyards shaken by the wind, and with little walled gardens behind, where washing was flapping in the air; this he recognized from the direction of Pilkin's thumb as Sunbeam Terrace. His lips tightened with a grip of disgust as he thought of the vulgar tragedy overhanging that row of stupid little cottages.

He had been spending three days with the Bishop and had heard the story of Bartown from wise lips. It was a mean sordid story; a story of drunkenness, depravity and licence; the story of a town sunken in iniquity and asleep in its vice. And now as he looked upon it, lying there behind the sandhills which only half shielded it from the wind and spray of the Atlan-

tic and the grit and dust of the surrounding sand-towans, he thought it a mean and a vile and a dreadful place, and his soul longed once more for the vigour and the roar of the Borough.

He had telegraphed to Mrs. Banthorpe, who had been acting for some months as housekeeper to the curate-in-charge, the time of his arrival. He wished he had telegraphed to Beatrice. She might have met him at the station. He wished she had been climbing that hill with him. Her letters had breathed the health and vigour of the place, and had promised him work after his own heart; but he could feel no enthusiasm now. It might have been different if she had been with him.

But as he turned again, and, as he approached it, let his eves rest on the noble tower of the church, something of his first enthusiasm returned on the wind. That church had stood there for hundreds of years reminding men and women of their mortality; every seventh day throughout those centuries, the noble liturgy of the Anglican Church had sounded through the aisles bidding men not to dissemble nor cloke their sins before the face of Almighty God, but to confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart. It was something after all to be a minister of that great and ancient Church. It was something after all to live out one's life preaching to men the indissoluble communion which linked humanity with Deity, mortality with Eternity. He would join his voice to the voices of those who had preached under that old roof the Word which was in the beginning with God. He would carry on the great tradition of the Litany, the cry that it may please God to bless and keep all men. So long as life lasted, so long as strength remained in his body and breath in his lungs, he would stand in that church and call to the town that it prepare for the hour of death and the day of judgment.

It was good, he told himself, as he reached the vicarage gate, to carry on the lamp of the ages in earth's darkest and least hopeful places.

He was greeted at the door by a portly rubicund matron, who at once began to treat him with what she appeared to regard as a kind and mothering manner.

"Come along, Mr. Rodwell," she said cheerfully and affectionately, beginning immediately to help him in his efforts to take off his overcoat; "the tea's been standing ten minutes, and the hot toast I made for you must be getting cold now; I'm sure it must. Come along; I'll show you the way; I expect you must be almost perished with the cold after your journey, for it's a bitter wind to-day, a bitter wind it is; I feel it myself."

She was a woman whose eyes disappeared and whose cheeks bulged out like two apples, when she smiled. She had a double chin, and rather a pleasant mouth. She walked trippingly, and with her elbows close to her side, and her hands clasped in front of her. One could hear her flopping slippers say, "Isn't she a lady?—isn't she a charming and a gracious lady?"

"I don't think there's anything else," she said, almost ecstatically surveying the tea, which was set out at the end of the dining-room table. She had the great gift of being carried away with the most complete admiration by the very smallest service she rendered to her employers. "No; I don't think there's any thing else. If there should be, perhaps you'll open the door and give me a call. Don't ring, please. A bell going off sudden over my head gives me the heartburn;

I'm a victim to it. I've never been used to bells. You see, when my husband was alive I kept a servant myself, and I'm not really used to finding myself treated quite like a servant, you understand. You don't mind, do you? Not that I'm proud! Oh, dear no: I'm not at all above doing a little tittivating here and a little tittivating there, and a little cooking and a little of this and a little of that, as the case may be: for I don't hold with pride at all, and as for the modern servant, well, there, it's a pity some of them aren't ladies with carriages to ride in and pug-dogs on their laps with a silver bell on a blue ribbon round their necks: I'm sure it is. Well, I won't say no more at present. You'll give me a call if you want me? I don't think there's anything else," she concluded, surveying with complacent smile the work of her hands, and then with a little bob of her head backed from the room and left the vicar to his tea.

But hardly had he begun to pour out the black decoction from the tea-pot, than she came bobbing into the room again, with a salt-cellar held triumphantly in her hand.

"Some gentlemen like it with their toast!" she said archly. "My husband always did. Toast without a pinch of salt, he used to say, is like a tail-coat without a silk hat. A very dressy man he was; always looked as if he had come out of a band-box; such a handsome man, too, I must show you his photograph one day; no one could have failed to see that he was a gentleman born and bred. Ah, it was a great difference to me when he went. Such a happy family we were. You never saw a more united family. All the boys and girls loved each other, and were devoted to their father and mother. One of my boys is out in

South Africa, acting with the most brilliant success as an agent for Mr. Shorder; my husband was a draughtsman, you know, in the same firm; then, my eldest girl's married and has got quite a nice little brood of her own in Dulwich: her sister Polly is in a City office; another son, Jack we call him, though his proper name is Launcelot, is doing extremely well in the Merchant Service: and his brother. Geoff, a dear little bright fellow he is. works for Mr. Colver in his offices over at Cowev. Mr. Colver has two or three offices, you know; very rich he is; one of the best solicitors in this part of England; he does all Mr. Shorder's work for him; very rich he is. But there I mustn't stop gossiping any more, must I don't think there's anything else: I don't think But, mind, vou're not to think it will be a there is. bit of trouble to me to come when you call. mind what I do. I'm ready and willing to do anything."

With another becoming smile which swallowed both her eyes at one gulp, and with any number of bobs and bows, the cheerful matron once more backed herself out of the room, and left poor Rodwell to himself.

"My first difficulty," ruminated Rodwell, with his teeth in a piece of leathery toast, "will be ridding the Church of England in Bartown of Mr. Pilkin, its Handy Man, and of Mrs. Banthorpe, its vicar's prospective murderess. I foresee the need of great firmness and a nice tact."

Once again the door opened, once again the cheerful Mrs. Banthorpe bobbed into the room.

"In and out like a dog at the fair, aren't I?" she began cheerfully. "I've only come to say this time that Mr. Pilkin is in the hall with the boxes, and he says that if you like to come now he'll help you to carry them upstairs."

"Tell Pilkin, if you please," said Rodwell, "if he cannot carry up the baggage himself to go and engage some one to help him."

It was almost the first words he had uttered in his own house, and his strong slow voice coming through the gloom of the room with such a very strong note to it, quite put Mrs. Banthorpe into a huff. "Very well," she said, "I'll tell him, and see what he says."

She left the door open, and Rodwell smiled to hear them talking and arguing in the hall. In a minute or two she returned. "Very well; Mr. Pilkin says he'll see what he can do for you after he's been home to his tea."

"Thank you," said Rodwell.

"I don't think there is anything else," she added.

"No, there is nothing else, thank you," he replied, getting up. "You can clear away whenever you please."

"Now, what about your supper?" she began. "We haven't had any little talk about arrangements, have we? Would you like a nice little bit of cheese, or an egg, or a bit of cold bacon; anything like that? Nothing will give any trouble. You mustn't think about me. Just consider yourself, and I'll do my best to make you comfortable."

"I wrote to you about my meals," said Rodwell.

"Oh, I couldn't make head nor tail of your writing," she replied cheerfully. "Not a word, I couldn't."

"Very well, then," said Rodwell; and he proceeded to give his orders, piling Pelion upon Ossa until poor Mrs. Banthorpe's head was quite reeling with it all. She said that one pair of hands could not possibly compass all that Mr. Rodwell demanded. He replied that he had requested her to engage a couple of servants.

Mrs. Banthorpe said that servants were not to be had for the asking. Mr. Rodwell replied that he would attend to that matter himself.

"By the way," said Mrs. Banthorpe, scenting battle, "the young lady who is living at the Headland was up here yesterday, Miss Haly I think her name is; she took the liberty of unpacking some of your cases in the study and putting things as she thought you would like them."

"I asked Miss Haly if she would be so kind as to do that," said Rodwell, and walked past Mrs. Banthorpe into the room which she had indicated as his study.

He struck a match, lighted two candles, and looked about him. Here at last was refreshment to his eye and hope to his mind. The painters and paper-hangers had done their work tolerably; the furniture people had not damaged his precious belongings; and Beatrice Haly had put things exactly as she knew he would like them.

He closed the door, and walked about the room with a sense of happiness. There was the beautiful Leonardo's Christ, with the resigned eyes veiled by the patient lids, and the mouth breathing tranquillity of mind. There was the perfect Venus gazing forward into the ages with eves that never shone with any but the most exalted thoughts. There, everywhere about the room, were his books, his enamels, his china, his mosaics, his lovely silver and his beautiful mirrors. It brought back to him the Borough, and the rough men who had sat with him in his room in Trinity Square, and listened as he talked into their minds respect for art and appre-It filled him, quietly and ciation of the beautiful. serenely, with a sense of his mission, with a confident enthusiasm for his work; he must labour to lift this

town from ignorance and vice into the cleaner air of art and religion.

He went to bed forgiving Mrs. Banthorpe and Pilkin their sins, and looking forward with pleasure to meeting Beatrice on the morrow. And as he fell into sleep, Joe Blund rolled out of the *Angel*, arm in arm with Dick Vick, and staggered home to Mrs. Blund, who in the cover of darkness, was polishing the brass plate on their cottage railings.

CHAPTER V

WHEREIN PILKIN IS INTRODUCED TO SOME LONDON WAYS AND OUR HERO TO SOME BARTOWN CHARACTERS

It was still blowing half a gale when Rodwell awoke from his first sleep under the rectory roof. It seemed to him the roof was filled with roaring wind, and that every window in the house was rattling. He looked from his bedroom window and saw that the Headland was enveloped in mist and that the leaden sea was splashed with sullen white. The trees were swaying in the wind, and filling the earth with a rich sound like the echo of thunder. Over the towans he could see the sand furiously running in gritty clouds before the driving gale.

Mrs. Banthorpe had opened his door half an inch or two, and had squeezed into his room a tin jug of hot water, a cup of tea with two lumps of wet sugar in the saucer, and his boots badly polished. As soon as he was dressed he went downstairs and passed out into the garden. Pilkin, dragging his corkscrew leg behind him, was pottering about with a basket containing little green packets of seed with orange-coloured labels.

"Mrs. Banthorpe tells me you have got the church keys," said Rodwell.

"Yes," answered Pilkin; "they hang on the parlour door of my cottage." He rested his basket on one of his knees and smiled cheerfully. "I smoke my pipe at night and contemplate 'em," he said. "Them keys is to me what your collar is to you. They manifest and declare my orfice."

"Will you go and get them?" asked Rodwell.

"What! Now?" demanded Pilkin, in amazement. "Well, your kewriosity do run sharp; my word, it do."

"I will wait for you at the church door," said Rodwell, moving away.

Some people have the gift of expressing in their eyes that determination of purpose in dealing with inferiors which is very often unpleasant to put into words but which unfortunately is even more often necessary. Rodwell had inherited this gift of command from his father. His face was gentle and tender to the point of weakness, his voice never departed from the tone of kindness and sympathy, but his eyes could command to obedience the most stubborn and obstinate of those with whom he had to deal. Pilkin went down before him like a ninepin.

In five minutes the old clerk opened the church door, and Rodwell took the keys from the lock. "Every morning," he said, "I wish you to open this door before you do anything else, to leave it open, and then to bring the keys to me. The last thing in the evening I wish you to lock the door, and then to leave the keys with Mrs. Banthorpe."

"What! You mean to leave the church open all day?" cried Pilkin.

"Hush!" said Rodwell quietly, turning round and facing Pilkin. "We do not shout in church, we lower our voices."

"The last parson," grumbled Pilkin, "had a voice to him like the Bull o' Bashan!"

Rodwell's heart sank as he advanced up the gloomy building. There was a musty odour in his nostrils, his eyes were greeted by hideous pews, the coloured windows were unlovely, and the crimson and gold altar cloth was stained with age and neglect. Only the pulpit and the sounding-board were beautiful, a seventeenth century pulpit of black oak deeply and lovingly carved. It looked out of place in the church; it struck a false note in the midst of ugly newness and careless neglect.

Everywhere Rodwell discovered neglect and carelessness. The vestry was damp and grimy. The surplices were soiled. The very ink-stand on the table was spotted with ink and coated with dust. He picked up a pen, and pointed out to Pilkin that the nib was crossed and fibrous.

"This pen," he said, "is an idex to the whole church. Neglect, Pilkin. Sad neglect. The nib is crossed, the dust of ages clings to it. A man could never write his best with such a pen. A man could never praise his best in such a church. It is only the clerk in such a church who could feel a miserable sinner. We must alter all this. You must get in three or four women this morning to dust and sweep the pews, to scrub the floor, and polish the brass. The windows must be opened. By this afternoon I shall expect to find the church sweet, clean, and cared for."

He gave orders for the surplices of the choir to be washed immediately, and for the books in the church to be dusted and placed near the vestry fire that the damp and mildew might go out of them. The sacred vessels he himself carried to the vicarage to be cleaned reverently. "You will leave your garden to-day," said Rodwell, "and devote every minute to the church."

He discovered that the peal of bells had not been used for seven or eight years. "There's no money to pay ringers," said Pilkin; "I throws that in with the rest of my job. I pulls the single bell, bang, bang, bang, and it does as well as all the rest of 'em putt together. Only the reggeler people come, and they're dropping away gradual."

Rodwell convinced him in the few minutes of their converse that nothing in the past would guide the conduct of the church's future. Pilkin declared afterward in his cottage that it was like a "Revolution of Nature. Like waking up," he grumbled, "to find as nothing was what it was yesterday. Man and boy I've served Almighty God, and been Handy Man to the Established Church of England, and grown grey a-doing of my dooty; and now, here comes a young feller from up the country to tell me as all the time I've been serving the devil and acting Handy Man to Beelzebub."

He was greatly upset. He regarded the old church as his own particular property. Parsons came and went. They were merely lodgers. But he stayed on and looked after his property, and in his own fashion loved it and was proud of it. Rodwell to him was "a impudent anteloper, a upstart, a Jack-in-the-box, here to-day an' gorn ter-morrer." Pilkin demanded of his wife to be told what business a boy of Rodwell's years had to come messin' about with the old customs of his church. And Mrs. Pilkin could only reply, "Well, we know which side the bread's buttered, and that's summat."

As for Rodwell, unable to rest any longer in the dreary rectory, he set out to make his way to the Headland. It was good to be moving. The thunder of the sea and the roar of the wind did him good as he crossed the bridge in a wetting mist and made his way through the towans, with their shivering bluegreen reeds and chattering sands, to the soft and springy turf of the cliff. How the wind drove through the gorse and bracken! How the salt from the sea stung his lips! How good it was to feel his ears buffeted and deafened with the clamour of wind and He stooped his head to the storm, holding on his hat, with both hands, and stood, staggering and breathless, on the cliff top, looking at the huge rollers foaming towards the crescent of white sand with the spindrift driving from them into the mist that was over all the sea. The cliff was wooded almost to the golden rocks on the sand below. Primroses made a glory of that green wall against which the spray was blowing in great drenching clouds. There was not a gorse bush nor a tuft of ferns which did not shelter wild flowers. It was a kind soft coast. only sad where the cliffs fell away to the ruin of the towans, a gentle and a green coast facing a sea that was now grey and cold and cruel. He could feel how in summer a great heat would settle over the land. how the sea would lie down in a blue haze of rest, and how men and women would grow listless and languid in the hush and burden of the solstice.

He was drawing near to the Headland when he came upon a short and foreign-looking man dressed in black from head to foot, who was standing behind a bush of gorse looking hard across the down. Rodwell turned his eyes in that direction and saw Beatrice

riding with a wild-looking horseman beside her. He forgot the foreigner at sight of Beatrice. Then she saw him and waved. His eyes brightened and his heart was glad. He saw her speak to the horseman and heard that wild-looking man burst into a roar of laughter. In a moment they were together.

It was difficult to hear in the wind what she said from her restive horse; something about his being up early, something about her intention of coming to him. He glanced away from her to the rough giant on the fretting horse at her side. The man surveyed him with the look of a cruel amusement.

"Come in out of the wind," Beatrice said. "We can't talk here. Come in, Mr. Shorder, too."

Rodwell started at the name, and looked once more at the man, longer and harder, with a steady scrutiny.

"No, I won't come in," shouted Shorder, conscious of Rodwell's gaze. "But, look here; bring the new vicar to luncheon at one. I'll ask his churchwarden. And the organist—he works in my office. And I'll ask the Farnabys—wickedest men in the town. Awful fellows! Bring Miss Taylor. We'll have a parish warming. One o'clock."

He did not stop for an answer but rode away through the wind, smiling all over his face, and laughing in his heart at the grey-faced parson in his overcoat and wideawake. Rodwell, watching him, saw the foreigner come out from the bushes when Shorder had passed, and walk quietly down the hill; he thought nothing of it, and Beatrice apparently didn't see the man.

Rodwell walked beside Beatrice without speaking. He did not notice how the face of Beatrice glowed from her exercise nor how handsome she looked on Marco

He was feeling in some mysterious way the magic of Shorder's personality; he was trying to discover by careful thinking what it was in Shorder which interested him. So this was the notorious half-drunken and half-mad Squire of The Hangers. This was Champagne Shorder. And he was one of Rodwell's parishioners. This big, broad-shouldered giant, with a voice like the wind, and a face like the sea, was one of the souls over whose welfare it was his supposed duty to watch. He had expected a wild and contemptuous devil; he found instead a man instantly lovable and incurably bad.

"You have begun curating for me already," he said to Beatrice, as they crossed the hall. "Champagne Shorder is not at all the man I expected him to be."

She, who was still perplexed, after many hours in the society of Shorder, as to his real character, was amused at Rodwell's instant decision in the matter. For a moment she felt unpleasantly superior to Rodwell. Then she upbraided her heart for its arrogance, and told herself that Rodwell's soul saw immediately all the clear shining good in a man's character, while she teased herself with a critical psychological analysis that was not inspired by charity. Her eyes rested on him with admiration: "I'm so glad," she said, "that you have discovered his worth."

Rodwell amused both Beatrice and Christabel by his account of Mrs. Banthorpe's mothering and Pilkin's attempt at overlordship. He made them feel how he was treated like a little child, and how it was the evident intention of these two good people mercifully to kill him before he could come to any greater harm. He made them feel how already it was an obsession

with him to sit and listen with stretched nerves for Mrs. Banthorpe to say, "Well, I don't think there's anything else."

"You will have to get rid of them both," said Chris-

tabel, with decision.

"Oh, I hope not," answered Rodwell. "That would be like the poison shirt. I should die in the process. No: I think it will be possible to shape them into their offices."

It was agreed that Shorder's invitation should be accepted, and at half-past twelve they drove away in Beatrice's carriage, speculating on the company they would meet at the Hangers.

"I fear, Mr. Rodwell," said Christabel over her shawls. "that the town is even worse than you expected. Mr. Shorder gives us a terrible account of it."

"I think it is his métier to exaggerate," Beatrice

said quietly.

"He mentioned something about people named Farnaby," said Rodwell.

"All I know about them," answered Beatrice, "is that they are brothers, and that they have a cookhousekeeper who is the envy of every other housewife in the place."

"He said they were the wickedest men in the town." Rodwell said quietly.

"I distinctly remember," said Christabel, "that he told us they were the fastest men in England."

"We shall see," Beatrice replied.

"So far as I can gather," said Christabel, leaning forward, "there is not a single respectable person in the whole neighbourhood. The leading family in the place is a solicitor's family. There is no tone. There is no note. The people are benighted. Savages. Heathen."

The wind dropped as they left the town behind them and rattled along a good chalk road behind the Downs. They passed two or three nice houses standing in pretty gardens. Then they came into open country, and after half a mile reached four cross-roads with a blistered old signboard in the centre, standing out of a hummock of rough grass. The iron gates of The Hangers faced towards the turnpike road and led through open park-land, without any avenue, to the ancient mansion. It was a large white, ugly house, with a wood on one side of it, a garden on the other, and with a large lake, through which Mr. Shorder had often swum his horses, stretching in front of it.

Christabel was surprised to find that the house had all the 'elegance' and the 'splendour,' as she said afterwards, of a countrygentleman's establishment. The hall, into which they were ushered by two men-servants in livery with a butler to do them honour, had a hand-some oak staircase and a gallery running round it, and at the back, where the stairs branched away to right and left, there was an organ. The floor was covered with the skins of black bears. The panelled walls were hung with old portraits of noticeable merit. The furniture was all of a handsome Jacobean kind.

As they crossed the hall a door opened at the back and the man Rodwell had seen on the cliff came out and walked noiselessly across to the other side, where he disappeared behind the stairs. Beatrice saw him. He was a short, square-shouldered, olive-skinned man, with small prominent black eyes, a black moustache, and close-cropped black hair. One saw that he was a foreigner in his short plump hands and his little feet.

Shorder welcomed them in the handsome old-fashioned drawing room, with its French windows

overlooking the garden. He had changed his rough garments for a suit of white flannel and wore white shoes and a white hunting stock. His fair curly hair looked as if it had been shampooed, and his red face with its close-clipped light-coloured whiskers shone with good health.

He came forward and gave his arm to Christabel. "That hat suits you down to the ground!" he whispered in her ear. "Never seen you look so well. Why don't you always wear it?" He led her to a fat matron who was striving to look pompous and unexcited, and introduced her.

"Mrs. Colver," he said. "Now let me tell you that Mrs. Colver would never have dreamed of acceptin' an invitation at such insultin' short notice if I had not told her that she should meet you. There!"

He then carried Beatrice to the two Miss Colvers. "I don't know whether you have travelled much, Miss Haly," he said; "but these young ladies, Judith and Ulrica are their names—Judith is the naughty one, and Ulrica is the wicked one—are the envy and admiration of Bartown on account of their foreign experiences."

"Oh, Mr. Shorder! Really!" they exclaimed together; and then they both hurried to tell Beatrice that they had merely been to Lucerne, and had only climbed to the respective tops of the Rigi, the Stanserhorn, and Pilatus.

Shorder then presented Rodwell first to his church-warden, Mr. Colver, a comfortable-looking red-faced, grey-haired, and grey-bearded man, who thought that he could not afford to let himself be genial and always adopted in consequence a most offensive attitude of tolerant patronage; and afterwards, to his

organist, Mr. Letheby. Rodwell took heart of grace when he looked into the eyes of Mr. Letheby. The organist was a tall, thin, sloping-shouldered young man, whose body was wasted by suffering and whose countenance expressed the gentlest refinement and diffidence. There was something feminine and kind in the dark eyes of this pale-faced young man; something winning and affectionate in his soft voice; he suggested to Rodwell a man who had inherited by birth all the instincts and traditions of a gentleman, but whose lot in life had prevented him from shaping those instincts and traditions in the modern school of manners and conduct.

While they were all talking together; Shorder going now to Ulrica Colver to make quite sure that it was the Stanserhorn she had climbed, not Mont Blanc, and then going to Mrs. Colver to advise her, if she wished to be scandalized, to get Miss Taylor to tell her some stories about Tunbridge Wells; the door was opened and the two Mr. Farnabys were announced.

"Now, look out for your eye!" whispered Shorder into the ear of Rodwell, and went down the room.

At first Rodwell saw nothing, for Shorder's gigantic shoulders blocked everything out in the width of the doorway. Then he saw that Shorder was shaking hands with a gentle little brown-bearded creature who reminded him of a dormouse, and that behind the dormouse came a taller, leaner, longer-necked and bonier gentleman, who in spite of a copper-coloured face and a drooping moustache, looked considerably less ferocious than the bearded dormouse.

Two more modest, more quiet, more pleasantvoiced and diffident middle-aged gentlemen never walked under English skies. Both were scrupulously dressed and finely booted. The smaller and the elder brother, John Farnaby, who wore a single eye-glass, was dressed in a suit of blue serge, the top button of the square-cut coat being left something rakishly open; he carried his hands on his hips, and had the air of a man troubled about many things. He was beginning to be bald, but his eyebrows were heavy, and his moustache was thick. From his mouth breathed the perfume of musk cachous.

The younger and the taller brother, Frank Farnaby, was dressed in dark brown tweed, and could not boast so great a mastery over himself as the dormouse. He carried his hands rather nervously in front of him, the fingers of one hand attending to the cuff which graced the wrist of the other hand. He had larger, lighter-coloured eyes than John. He smiled more easily. He glanced about him more apprehensively. He appeared more ready to speak, more anxious to be polite. From all about him there issued the odour of eau-de-cologne.

"How's Mrs. Dumper?" Shorder was saying to John Farnaby. "You must introduce her to Miss Haly. Mrs. Dumper is the cordon blew of Bartown," he explained. "She's a wunner; ain't she, John? Her pastry is not to be matched; her curries are incomparable; her preserves and her pickles, and that real wonderful relish of hers, John, old cock—eh? what about that relish, old boy?"

"Yes, it's a very good relish," said John, dusting his moustache with a folded pocket handkerchief.

"Ah, my word, it is!" laughed Shorder, bringing Frank forward.

Beatrice, who was being bored to death by Pilatus and the Rigi, welcomed with pleasure the advent of

the two quiet brothers. She was glad to find herself at luncheon sitting next to Frank Farnaby. Although so diffident and quiet he had a vein of genial humour in his nature. He was a most loving student of Dickens, and had all the wit and frolic of the master at his finger tips. "We have got a very fine Dickens' collection," he told Beatrice; "we always read something of his aloud before going to bed." He told her that he and his brother had spent over twenty years of their lives in "Injia." His brother had been a tea planter, and he himself had served in the Bank of Bengal. His brother, he said, was immensely clever. They were very happy in Bartown. They had a garden they were very fond of, and they kept a few pets.

"How's the donkey?" cried Shorder, leaning forward. Beatrice looked towards him, and saw that his face was red with wine and amusement. "I must tell you, Miss Haly," he said, "that these two brothers when they approached the Widow Dumper with a proposal that she should give up her cottage and come and house-keep for them, were met with the reply, 'Where I goes, Poppy goes!' Poppy is her donkey. So, to get Mrs. Dumper, they had to take Poppy as well. The joke is that both of 'em are the most famous walkers in this part of the world. They hate saddleback, and they abominate drivin'. Walkin' is their mania. But now, every unblessed day of the week you will see 'em drivin' forth in a tub cart, sadder than mutes, their eyes miserably set on the twitchin' ears of Poppy, who must have her exercise or she will die."

"Oh, come now!" said John.

[&]quot;That's hardly the whole story," smiled Frank. "We're very fond of Poppy. She's a very nice donkey."

"It's surprising," said little John seriously, "how fast that donkey can move when she has a mind to it. You'd be surprised." He looked all round the table. "You really would; you'd be surprised."

"Then there's Fluffy!" laughed Shorder, from the top of the table. "How's Fluffy? Fluffy is Mrs. Dumper's dog. She wouldn't leave her dog behind. 'Where I goes,' she says, 'Fluffy goes.' It's one of those white woolly dogs like a toy lamb. A square of wool with four straight sticks at the corners. It wears a bell round its neck. It's always chargin' out of the kitchen and barkin' at nothin'. John Farnaby is always compassin' how he may kill it; and Frank Farnaby is always prayin' that it may get distemper late in life and pop off quick."

"Oh, really, really!" said John.

"Not quite so bad as that," smiled Frank.

"An excellent house-dog, excellent /" said John, with great and solemn emphasis. "'Pon my word, I don't think any one would dare to come about the place with that little dog on the premises. I do not."

"And it's a very affectionate little thing," Frank said to Beatrice, endeavouring to escape from a general conversation. "My brother is very clever with animals, and he is teaching it to do some quite amusing tricks. We are often entertained by its little ways."

Miss Christabel Taylor was so satisfied with the state and circumstance of The Hangers that she felt almost reconciled to her exile in Bartown. The centre of the table was occupied by gold and silver plate, each piece representing some triumph of Champagne Shorder, either with his racehorses, his rifle, his fists, or his feet —for he had been a famous runner and jumper in his early manhood, and had won many notable prizes both

in Germany and in England. The table silver was of the handsomest kind; the glass Miss Taylor had never seen excelled: the cloth was of the most beautiful flowered damask: and behind the tall backed chairs. there waited four servants in livery who, for carriage and what Miss Taylor called 'that indescribable air of an English gentleman's servant,' equalled anything the good lady had seen either in Tunbridge Wells or in London. Furthermore, it must be added, under the rose, that Miss Taylor having first surprised Mrs. Colver with a marchioness and then winded her with a duchess, had finally floored the good matron altogether with a Royal Princess, and subdued her to that state of humble admiration and wondering inferiority which she considered to be the fitting and natural condition of all provincial people honoured with her friendship.

- "Yours are nice girls," she had said to Mrs. Colver.
- "I am glad you think so," Mrs. Colver had replied.
- "A season in London, of course——" Miss Taylor had begun.
 - "Oh, of course, it would," Mrs. Colver had agreed.
- "Perhaps, later on, they would like to come and stay with us in Charles Street. Would they like that, do you think?"
- "Immensely! Oh, how very kind of you. They would be delighted I am sure. Really, you are very kind."
- "Young things interest me," Christabel had replied, not without a sigh. "Our dear duchess always says, too, that I have a way of bringing them on. I am not at all sure that it is so. I do not know if it is so. But I confess young things charm me. They remind me of so many pleasant memories, and of one very, very great memory."

The sigh of Christabel would have drawn tears from an unhappily married woman with a large detested family.

When Beatrice glanced sometimes towards the head of the table, it seemed to her that Tom Shorder had got them all into the room merely for his amusement. He appeared to be laughing at every one. His eyes moved round the table, smiling with a kind of rich amusement. He would throw back his head every now and then and laugh whole-heartedly. way difficult to determine he seemed to sit outside not only the circle of commonplace but even outside the courts of common humanity. His vices might be of a degraded kind and his follies worthy only of a German student in his cups; and vet in spite of it all. there was in the man's mind, behind that smiling mask of his plain good-tempered countenance, a native superiority, a born greatness, an intrinsic eminence. some recondite fashion, she felt, this rough and foolhardy dare-devil, with his simple, frank, and open countenance, was a Triton, and they were all but as minnows in his presence.

She saw, as he drank more wine, and his fair hair grew more tumbled, and his fresh complexion grew more pink, that his eyes dwelt longer upon the face of Richard Rodwell than upon any one at the table. Also she noticed that the smile hardened in his eyes, and that there came from his lips an occasional snort, a scoff as though his mind could not repress the contempt it nourished. Then, after almost scowling at the parson, he would suddenly break out laughing, and turn quickly away with a word of chaff for John Farnaby, or a rich compliment for Christabel.

Rodwell had Letheby on one side of him, and

found himself greatly interested in the delicate young man. He learned that Philip Letheby had worked for ten years with a firm of engineers in London, and that it was only because his invalid father, an old drawing master, had been ordered by the doctor to live in the West of England that he had taken service in Shorder's Works. "Oh, I like it," he made haste to add. "I think there is no air like this part of the coast, and some of the scenery about here is splendid. I take a great many photographs. What I meant to say was only that of course "—sinking his voice—" there is no possible prospect for a man in Mr. Shorder's Works. We are doing very little just now. The war in South Africa has been a great blow to us. And, in any case, Bartown is not London!"

They talked about the town and about the church. Philip Letheby was delighted to find that Rodwell understood and loved music. He entered with great excitement into the vicar's schemes for brightening the services, but doubted if the choir could be properly trained; he said that no one in Bartown took the smallest interest in the church. Then he added ruefully, "the organ is a very bad one. Oh, a shocking bad organ! The little American organ which I bought second-hand and keep in my bedroom is far better. Really it is."

"We must get a new organ, then," said Rodwell.
"I count on organ recitals and sacred music for week-day services. I see that Mr. Shorder has an organ here. I should very much like to hear you play after luncheon."

"Oh, you should ask Mr. Shorder to play it," replied Letheby. "He plays finely. Far better than I do. He ought really to play in church; but he never goes

It's a great pity," he added, lowering his voice; "it is a bad example for the men in the Works and the people in the town. I wish he were different. He's a fine fellow in many ways, but——"he ended by shrugging his shoulders.

They were startled by the big voice of Shorder breaking in upon them from the top of the table.

"I'll bet a monkey, parson," he called, "that Phil Letheby is telling you how that this is the wickedest and baddest little town under heaven. The folk don't go to church. They don't care a button for music. They don't care a straw for sermons. They're a downright bad lot. So they are! He's quite right. They're bad all round. And now I'll give you another side of their badness. They've got no pluck; they've got no go. They're a lot of old sheep. Look at this, then. For years I've given 'em every chance to take an interest in sport. I keep a pack of hounds. No one comes. I hold a steeplechase meetin' three times in the season. No one enters a horse. I have runnin' matches, shootin' matches, boxin' matches, wrestlin' matches-dash my wig and buttons! they're afraid to show up. Ain't that true, Colver? They're afraid to show up! Well, then, judgin' between what Letheby has told you on the superstitious side, and what I tell vou now on the natural side, you tell us what you make of such a place?"

Rodwell smiled.

"Come on," cried Shorder, lifting his glass. "Sum up, and deliver judgment."

"Just at present," answered Rodwell, "I only want to hear you play your organ in the hall."

There was a chorus of approval at this, and Beatrico turned curiously to look at Shorder. Here was a new

surprise for her. Shorder's eyes went to her face, and he got up from the table. "Would you like to hear me play, Miss Haly?" he demanded.

"Yes," she answered.

"Come on, then," he said, laughing. "I'm ready for anythin'."

They sat in the hall and listened to him. He played very fairly well and the organ was a good one. He played "The Entry of the Gods into Walhalla" from Das Rheingold. He told Beatrice afterwards that Wagner was the only composer whose music suggested to him the sense of the open air. That was why he liked him. Not for anything else. Church music he called indoor stuff. He couldn't abide it.

"I hope you'll help Mr. Rodwell," she said to him, as they moved about the hall examining the old Jacobean chests.

He started and laughed noisily. "Help him!" he said. "No, be hanged to him. I've done enough already. I've introduced him to his chief parishioners; what more should I do? I don't like parsons. I told you so. Sentiment and superstition—I hate 'em both. Let him look after his own job."

"You could be such an influence on his side," she said quietly.

"My dear lady, you are highly amusin'!" he laughed, looking down at her. "Your wheedlin' assumptions take the breath out of my sails. I could be an influence on his side? Of course I could. The devil could be an influence on the side of the Almighty. But he isn't."

With that he went off laughing from her, and sat down beside Christabel, asking the old lady, apparently with the most consuming interest, whether she remembered in Tunbridge Wells a person he improvised for the occasion, a Major Firebrace.

"Very handsome, tall, distingué, with long, black, Piccadilly weepers, and a single eye-glass."

"I seem to remember such a man," answered poor Christabel, who, in spite of all her experience, was a

veritable child in the hands of a quizz.

"Waltzed divinely," said Shorder. "Beautiful figure. Shot a Frenchman in a duel about that dancer, what was her name—oh, you know—dear me!—why, Taglioni to be sure. You must remember him. Charley Firebrace of the Bengal Cavalry. Very tall, handsome, dashing, knock-me-down fellow. Ate chutney, and drank brandy. Come, Miss Taylor. There were many of 'em, I know, but Charley Firebrace was noticeable. He stood out. He was a killer."

"I remember a *Captain* Firebrace," said Christabel, prevaricating, her eyes glancing for a moment at Mrs. Colver. "A tall, rather good-looking man, he was," she went on with admired nonchalance, "not anything very particular, but good-looking certainly. I think he danced pretty well. But whether he wore whiskers and an eye-glass I cannot remember. *Major* Firebrace, you say? I'll look among my photographs."

Letheby was playing Kyries of his own composition at the organ, and Rodwell was standing at his side.

Beatrice sat a little in the shadow of the great hall with Mr. John Farnaby breathing cachous at her side; he was telling her in his confidential voice that his brother Frank was the dearest fellow in the world, but *most* indiscreet about his health. "I have to be so careful of him," said the dormouse, wrinkling his forehead and regarding Beatrice mournfully through



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his eye-glass; "he takes the most appalling risks. Foolhardy, perfectly foolhardy at times. And, as I tell him, it's really wicked; a man with such a constitution," he continued miserably, "might go out like the snuff of a candle." He looked up at the organ loft, as though it were sounding a prophetic Dead March, and shook a most pessimistic head. "Like the snuff of a candle," he repeated dismally.

"Let us go out of doors," cried Shorder in his big voice, coming down the centre of the hall. "By heaven! it's enough to choke a man indoors. Two hours under a roof is as much as I can endure. Oh, leave the parson and his hymn-maker," he laughed, and led the way hatless through the double doors into the park.

The restlessness and impatient vigour of the man made themselves apparent as soon as he was in the open. He whistled up a flock of Iceland ponies directly he got in the park, and went in amongst them feeding them with biscuit and smacking them like naughty children. After he had played with them boisterously for some minutes, he returned to his guests. He called upon John Farnaby to run him a race, and Farnaby offering to walk him a certain distance, and starting off in the most approved fashion of professional walkers-believing that he was making a great impression on the ladies-Tom Shorder took a run, leapt forward and touching the little gentleman's shoulders lightly with his fingers vaulted clean over his head. He never saw bush, gate nor hurdle but he must go out of his way to jump it, and when he came to the stables he played such antics with his horses as would have got any other man kicked to death.

Christabel could not bear to see him. She cried

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out that he was a wicked man, and leaning on Mrs. Colver's arm, and keeping as far away from the horses as possible, she made her way from the stables in double-quick time, and sat down on the handle of a wheelbarrow in the yard gasping for breath and with one hand clutched to her heart.

Shorder atoned for his naughtiness by giving the old lady his arm and walking at a funeral pace when he led the party to see first his kennels, then his duck decoy, and afterwards his heronry. He showed them a couple of foxes which had arrived on the previous night, and the hatching boxes in which three hundred hens would presently sit on pheasants' eggs. He grew restive again as they approached the house, and dropping Christabel's arm, exclaiming that he really must give the parson a shock, he whistled to the stable yard and called to a groom, who answered him, to let out Glorvina.

In a minute a great bony white mare came running loose from the yard without either saddle or bridle, (greatly to the terror of Christabel, who got behind Mrs. Colver, saying that they would all surely be kicked to death) and trotted towards Tom Shorder like a dog to his master's whistle.

"Go and open the door, Frank, old cock!" laughed Shorder; and as John Farnaby raced ahead to prevent Frank Farnaby from attempting too much physical exertion, the Squire vaulted on to the mare's back and guided her with his legs at a sharp trot to the porch of the house.

They hurried forward, all except Christabel and Mrs. Colver, and were just in time to see Shorder forcing Glorvina up the central staircase. Letheby on the organ seat was looking down and laughing, and Rod-

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well was standing there watching Shorder with a quiet amused smile.

The Squire, who was laughing good heartedly, took the old mare right up the stairs, round the gallery, where he lighted a cigar, and then made her carry him down to the hall again.

"Ever seen Watts's picture of the man and the white horse?" he laughed. "This is the original."

He dismounted on the drive, told Glorvina to wait, and then went to the dining-room and returned with sugar for the old mare. Beatrice went out and patted Glorvina's neck. As soon as the mare had taken the last nob from Shorder's hand, he smacked her on the quarters, and with a little frisk of her head and tail, she trotted quietly back to the stables.

While they were standing there, the foreigner she had seen crossing the hall on their arrival, came out from behind a wing of the house and passed down the drive. "Let us go in," said Shorder.

As the guests were taking their leave Shorder asked Beatrice to bear in mind that for the first time in his life he had done the civil thing by a parson. "I am sure," she said, "that it will not be the last time. I am quite sure, though for some unreasonable caprice you will not say so, that you like Mr. Rodwell."

"Like him!" exclaimed Shorder, amazed. "Now why in the name of thunder, Miss Haly, should you say a thing like that? Like him! A sick little fellow like him! Come, you're wheedlin' me! I wish you wouldn't. Let's try and be friends."

He turned away from her to attend to the other guests. But just as her carriage was moving away he hurried to the window: "You'll be ridin' on the down to-morrow?" he called.

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"I don't know," she answered. "My holidays are at an end. Mr. Rodwell begins work to-morrow."

He burst out laughing and dropped back behind the carriage. As they made the curve of the carriage sweep, Beatrice saw him standing hatless between the brothers Farnaby, laughing all over his face, a cloud of tobacco smoke coming from his mouth.

"My dear Beatrice." said Christabel, looking from Rodwell to Beatrice and from Beatrice to Rodwell: "I fear that Mr. Shorder, nice as he is, very nice at times, in fact, is not a man we ought to see any more. I have been hearing a great deal about him from Mrs. Colver. My dear, he is quite awful. His mother, Lady Emily, refuses to live with him. She has a house in Cheltenham, and never sees him or writes to him. His two sisters, who are both fortunately married, never come near him. He is, in fact, completely ostracized by his own people. In the last ten years. they say, he has spent half a million of money. Not spent it but wasted it-riotously. He is often so intoxicated that his servants have to carry him to bed. No one in the county has any thing to do with him. Some people say he is married, and certainly his liaisons have been of the very wickedest kind. I must not say any more on that head. All I do say is. that for such a man to be at the head of any parish in the world is a most dreadful calamity, not only for the clergyman of the parish, but for the parish itself. I think we ought to be most careful about him, and certainly we ought to discourage his visits to the house."

Beatrice patted her hand. "He shows us his better side," she said.

"Ah, that is the man's dreadful hypocrisy," said Christabel.

"No, he is not a hypocrite," Beatrice replied.

"Well, I ask Mr. Rodwell to decide!" exclaimed Christabel. "Here is a man notorious all over the world—but there, I'll say no more. My judgments are not wanted. The experience I have gathered is not required. Let us talk about something else."

"What nice brothers!" said Beatrice cheerfully.

"Yes," said Rodwell. "Charming creatures. Oh, delightful."

"How they love each other," Beatrice went on. "John watches over Frank like a nurse; and Frank regards John as the cleverest man in the world. Christabel, my dear, we are going to tea there on Friday. You shall try some of Mrs. Dumper's cakes."

"What did Mr. Shorder mean by telling us that

they were fast?" asked Christabel angrily.

"I have made up my mind," said Rodwell, "to get rid of Mr. Colver as soon as possible, and to make John Farnaby my churchwarden. Letheby is excellent; not a first-rate musician; but he loves music. That is the great thing."

"And Mr. Shorder?" asked Beatrice. "What will you make of him?"

"He will come later," said Rodwell.

There was such steadfast strength in his voice, and such firm assurance in his eyes as he raised them to her face, that Beatrice felt in her heart for the character of this quiet tranquil man the old admiration, which some magic of his soul had changed to love.

CHAPTER VI

A VISIT TO GUN COTTAGE

BEATRICE was wondering as she drove with Christabel to tea at Gun Cottage what Rodwell would make of Bartown. She had now been with him over the church, and had met with him three or four of his parishioners. The experience was not altogether exhilarating.

It was agreed between them, first and foremost, that a new organ must be put into the church. Then a new altar cloth was essential. She asked him to let her present the church with both these necessities, and went on to propose the building of a hall for meeting in the week-day.

"That," Rodwell had said, "is not, I think, a necessity. My idea is to use the church in some way every day in the week till the people get used to regarding it as their natural meeting-place. When we have got the new organ we will arrange for recitals and sacred singing. Then I propose to lecture on week-days after a musical service. Lectures on painters and poets. Everything that will give the people an encouragement towards culture. Why not in church? The church is the proper place. I want to make it the central place in the life of the town."

In the High Street they had made the acquaintance of Dr. Blund, introduced to them by Mrs. Blund, who

was hanging about for that purpose; and, while they were talking, round the corner suddenly had come Mr. Richard Vick, who was also introduced to them.

Dr. Blund was twitching with excess of alcohol, and only muttered and frowned as he listened to the hurried chattering of his wife. The terrible old doctor, with his hairy purple face and his sunken eyes, appeared to regard his talkative wife with the gaze of one convinced that she was doing him the most dreadful disservice. It was wonderful to Beatrice that this little woman, instead of shrinking from exhibiting her husband, should have so pathetic a faith in the dreadful-looking rogue that she evidently dreamed he had but to be seen to be chosen as medical adviser.

Dick Vick was a different customer. He was slight and well-built; a fair-haired, clean-shaven, cruel-looking man. He seemed to have the greatest contempt for Rodwell and hailed Joe Blund cheerfully as "my poor degraded friend." He stood with his feet apart, one hand in his coat pocket, the other nursing the bowl of his pipe. He eyed Beatrice insolently, with a slow stare of appreciation, as though he expected her to be flattered by his glance.

When they had done with these people, as the men came out from Shorder's Works they fell in with Philip Letheby. He was walking beside a little fat tub of a man with a vast red shining face and sandy curls, whom he introduced to them as Captain Duck. Rodwell recognized him as the father of the pretty girl who hung about the streets with young Godfrey Eyre.

"Captain Duck and I are partners," said Philip Letheby, "in prospecting for tin. He has just been tramping over the moors, looking at disused mines. There's going to be a boom in Cornish mines."

"Pleased to meet you, sir," said Captain Duck to Rodwell, passing his heavy stick from his right hand to his left; and then turning to Beatrice, "You, too, miss, if I may be allowed to say so. What Mr. Letheby says is true. We're partners. Tin! Well, I want a little of that. Father of nine!" he exclaimed proudly of himself. "Fifty-six years of age next September, and never had a doctor not since an infant. What's more, I don't want one. Ha, ha! I don't want one." He took a good look at Rodwell. "You'll have your work cut out for you here," he said. "Infamous. That's what this town is. Infamous."

Rodwell hoped that he would have Captain Duck's assistance in making it a little better.

"Well, you mustn't expect too much, you know," said Captain Duck confidentially, " not from the father of nine, you mustn't. It's a tidy lot to look after, and mouths to fill, that is. Nine. Four boys and five Nine in all. But if a bit of advice to you is girls. any good, why, you try and take hold first of all of my next door neighbour, Captain Stringer by name. You just try and convert him. He's a "-Captain Duck lowered his voice, and shielded the word from Beatrice with his hand, over which he glanced at her apprehensively, lest she should hear a syllable—" a atheist ! Don't believe in anything!" he went on in his natural voice, lowering his stout stick to lean upon it. "Not in church, he don't; not in religion; not in God: not in nothing. Don't-believe-in-anything / He reads a lot, you know. He reads too much. I think. He's got two he's particular fond of. Hackel and Heagle, he calls them. If it ain't Hackel, it's

Heagle; and sometimes it's both together—which is horrible and no mistake. He floors anybody about here. There's no arguin' with him. But as I say, speaking from experience, the proof of the pudding's in the eating. Here am I, father of nine, four boys and five girls, never had a doctor in my life, and happy and jolly all the day long; and there's old Captain Stringer, with no wife and no children and no religion, and three well-off sisters to look arter him, with a face on him as long as a coffin, and always got the doctor!"

Beatrice, as she drove to Gun Cottage, went over all this in her mind, and wondered what would come of Rodwell's labours.

She found herself in something of a difficulty. She could not quite feel that she and Rodwell shared the same outlook. She had thought that after his battle for faith in the Church, after that slow-won and difficult victory, they would stand nearer to one another. She had expected some barrier between them to break down. She had hoped that now they would stand together and view all things in the same light. was not so. If anything the priest was further from her than the layman had been. She could not throw herself heart and soul into his work as she had hoped to do. It seemed to her that he had now, instead of the old intellectual distraction which kept him from her, a cold affection for something which had become her rival. He was possessed by the Church.

She had watched him as he stood listening to Captain Duck in the square. The lean grey face of the man, with its calm eyes and its fine mouth, was infinitely beautiful in her eyes. She had never seen

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a countenance in the world which so appealed to her admiration. The man was strongly and romantically beautiful. There was no controversy on that. In the eyes of most people he had charm and attraction. But there was not yet in his face that which she hungered to see. The grace and the charm were all of the intellect. The heart had not yet touched that perfect face with the fires of charity.

She would help him. She would work for him. In any case she would watch over him, and be always at hand to answer him when he called to her. But she feared greatly lest something in her heart, which she cherished as the greatest of all her possessions, should die down and perish as he hurried, in his enthusiasm for the sacrifice of the Church, further and further from the place where she stood in the universe.

These thoughts she put from her as the carriage drew up before a little white gate in the midst of a neatly clipped box hedge. Gun Cottage stood back from the road behind this box hedge with a small garden in front of it, through which a path of white shingle led to the front door. It was a two-storeved cottage, with a verandah over which jasmine, wistaria, and roses struggled against each other in their efforts to embrace the windows above. Everything was wonderfully neat and trim. At the door, just under the verandah, stood a tall brass rod with a brush for muddy boots at the base of it. The brass on the little brown door was polished almost to the tone of silver. The red curtains drawn across the square glass in the door hung from a brass rod which was polished in a like manner.

The door was opened to them by John Farnaby,

with Frank close behind him, eager to welcome the ladies. Fluffy, who apparently only ran out to bark at nothing, did not make her appearance.

The most noticeable feature in the hall was a tiger-skin hanging with tremendous menace on the little wall. Christabel, not above putting the two brothers at their ease, seized upon the tiger-skin as an easy opening for conversation. "A very nice skin," she said; "which of you, I wonder, shot the terrible creature?"

"I'm afraid," said John, after a long pause, in which he had glanced quickly at Frank, and then looked away, "that I am responsible."

Without knowing it, Christabel had opened a nervous theme. It had long been observed by many people that John never said directly that he had shot the tiger; he carried it off with such statements as, "Yes, that is a sin which lies upon my conscience," or "I fear I am responsible"; and furthermore, it was observed that whenever he was called upon to make this statement Frank Farnaby looked away.

Some people thought that John had made private confession to Frank, and that Frank had agreed to let the subject be evaded as honestly as circumstances would permit, without compromising his brother's honour. Other people held that John did stoutly declare to Frank in private that he had shot the tiger, and that it was the life work of Frank to bring himself to the point of believing that his brother really had performed this astonishing feat of sportsmanship.

Beatrice was delighted with everything in Gun Cottage, and there were so many things to be seen, even in the hall where the tiger-skin hung—pictures of

Dickens, illustrations of Dickens' works, and a firstrate engraving of "The Vacant Chair"—that conversation soon passed away from the difficult subject of tiger shooting. The brothers were mild naturalists. They showed their visitors a cabinet in which every drawer contained the rarest and most beautiful seashells which they had gathered together on the sands and polished and arranged in elaborate patterns; that they prized their shells very highly was apparent from their simultaneous exclamation of smothered fear when Christabel, saying that one of the shells was new to her reached forth a finger to indicate that particular specimen. The brothers, moreover, had glass travs filled with butterflies and beetles and birds' eggs. all of which they displayed with the utmost care and the most obliging pleasure.

But it was in the garden that they came nearer to the heart of Beatrice. It was a trim and charming little garden, cared for most lovingly by Frank Farnaby, who had clipped the privet hedges, shaped the clumps of yew, laid down the shingle paths, and regulated the edgings of box. The thousands of crocuses and snowdrops were planted by his hands; he knew the name of every hyacinth and tulip which were waiting with the hosts of daffodils for the sun to shine them into flower; and there was not a rose tree or any flowering shrub in the green little garden of which he did not instantly give its particular name when asked by Beatrice.

Out of the centre of the lawn rose a white flagstaff, and at the end of the lawn, against a background of yews, azaleas, rhododendrons, and lilacs, stood a white dovecote on a pole which was half-hidden by the leaves of a crimson rambler. There were white

fantails rookety-cooing on the dovecote; and walking about on the lawn in apparent amity were a couple of sea-gulls and a jackdaw.

The gulls hopped open-mouthed to John Farnaby, who stooped his little body, and taking some biscuit out of his pocket, fed them and talked to them, addressing each one by name.

"My brother can do anything with birds," said Frank, smiling proudly. "Those gulls know his voice from mine quite well. They were wounded in the great gale two years ago. They were very timid at first; but he soon got them to feel at home, and now they will do anything for him. He calls one Drake, and the other Nelson—two of his favourite heroes.'

They were taken to see Poppy, whose loose-box was superb enough for a Derby winner. The bedding was of the best wheat-straw and so deep that Poppy walked thereon as if she were bedded on a spring mattress. The racks were filled with best meadow hay, and two dark green wooden buckets with white linings and white hoops round them, stood just inside the door filled with clear well water.

"My brother believes," said Frank, taking sugar from his pocket for the donkey, "that an animal should never be without food and water at any hour of the day and night. He has studied animals closely and it is one of his strongest convictions."

"She has, of course, her oats—crushed oats, and a little chaff mixed with chopped carrot—three times a day," said John. "That is another matter. Those are her regular meals."

John Farnaby's hedgehogs and tortoises were greatly admired by Beatrice and even Christabel grew effusive when she saw the Sebright bantams.

"It means a lot of work, of course," said John, scattering seed which he took from his right hand coat pocket, and seriously contemplating the live-stock at his feet. "A lot of work; and a lot of anxiety."

"But we get a great deal of pleasure from it all," said Frank, with a proud smile. "We are never dull here, and never idle."

On their return through the garden Christabel indicated the flag-staff in the centre of the lawn, and said that it gave quite a note to the little garden. John, stopping in his walk, placed his hands upon his hips and looked upwards at the fluttering halvards with a most responsible and solemn gaze. "Yes," he said, quietly, as though talking to himself and in that tone of voice, too, which instantly brings a hush to the heart of the hearer, a hush expectant of momentous utterance; "Yes; in the darkest hours of the South African War the flag of England flew there undaunted." He paused for a moment, "There were times," he said, "when my nother and I seriously discussed whether we should not lower it half-mast, or even haul it down." He paused again. Then, as if the words were wrung from him, he said very earnestly: "Thank God, we kept it flying."

As they walked forward in a religious silence to the house, Frank Farnaby told Beatrice in a muffled voice that they kept in their study in addition to the works of Dickens in several editions and every book that had ever been written about him, the two volumes of Chambers' Book of Days, and that on all the great National and Imperial Anniversaries they went out before breakfast and hoisted either the White Ensign or the Union Jack. "We are particularly careful,"

he said, "to observe all the great anniversaries of the Injian Mutiny. We both feel we owe so much to Injia. It gives us pleasure to do homage to her history."

"And that yew, shaped as a crown?" questioned Beatrice.

"Oh, we thought it would be nice," Frank answered, "to keep a memory of King Edward's coronation. I am afraid the work is not very well done. I was not in my usual health at the time; my brother helped me most kindly; but I fear it is not quite as well done as it should be. However, I hope to work on it again this summer."

In the drawing-room of the bachelors, where tea was served by a nervous red-cheeked girl in a stiff white apron and a black dress ending somewhere between her knees and her ankles, and whose scanty hair was done up in a tight knob under a little white cap, the visitors expressed the greatest admiration of Mrs, Dumper's skill to the delighted hosts. The jamsandwiches, the orange cake, the splits spread with cream and the Tough-Cake, all were declared to be of the most excellent character. And so, after tea, just before the carriage was rung for, the brothers produced for the edification of their visitors, the famous and incomparable Mrs. Dumper.

Although she had expected the summons, Mrs. Dumper loudly but genially blamed her two gentlemen, as she always called the brothers, for bringing her, in such an untidy condition, to see visitors. Of course she was as clean as a whistle and as fresh as a red-faced apple. She was a stumpy over-corpulent whan, here the stiffest and cleanest of blue-print dresses, the a square so white cap on her head, and a snow-white

apron covering a small part of her bosom and a great part of her lower limbs. She had a shining morning face, dark brown eyes, a nice little fat nose, a nice little fat mouth, and one or two double chins, only the last of which appeared to have anything in it.

Beatrice, after shaking hands with Mrs. Dumper, congratulated the good lady on her pastry, and declared that she must really try and discover the secret.

"The secret, miss," said Mrs. Dumper—an admiring Farnaby on either side of her-" is nothing more nor less than one of what I call 'Mrs. Dumper's Maxims.' I has maxims for everything. Without a maxim I couldn't breathe. How people get on without maxims I cannot think. But they don't. You've only got to look at their homes to see that they don't get on at all. Look at what they call the Servant Ouestion! Why. how many servant girls has passed through my hands and been a comfort to some of the first houses in England? If one, twenty. And why? Because I takes 'em young, and I imbibes 'em with maxims. Before they're allowed to handle a broom they must know the maxim of it. Before they're allowed to handle a saucepan they must know the maxim for that. Everything has a maxim. Take pastry, what you introduced the subject yourself. What is Mrs. Dumper's maxim for pastry? Why, it's this, miss: 'A glass rolling-pin and a fairy hand.' That's pastry in a nutshell. And it's likewise with curry. What's Mrs. Dumper's maxim for curry? Why, it's this, miss, and no one can say different: 'Three days of smelling it before the minute of serving it.' Ask my two gentlemen whether they ever eat a better curry in the coral strand than what I serve 'em with in Bartown!

miss; they couldn't do it. For there's only one way of doing or cooking anything, and that's the best way; and if you've got the right maxim it's the natural pedigree that you know the best way. I haven't no patience with people who do things without maxims. This world wasn't made without maxims, and nothing on this world will ever be made as the Creator intended it should be made without maxims neither. It's wicked, it's going against religion, it's—well, there, I don't know what it is—to think as how you can do your duty in that state of life to which it has pleased the Creator to call you without first getting hold of the maxim for it."

Christabel warmly commended Mrs. Dumper for these sentiments, which she declared did credit to the intelligence and to the soul of Mrs. Dumper; and Beatrice said that she should like her two hosts some day to put into the hands of the world a book entitled Mrs. Dumper's Maxims, which, she felt sure, would add greatly to the comfort and the quiet of the world.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Dumper, beginning to bustle, "one of my maxims is 'The tongue that rolls is a waste of coals,' so that I mustn't stand talking any more. I always teaches the young girls who come to me for training that 'the evening out is the time to spout.' A talking girl I couldn't abide for ten minutes. I've got one of the silliest girls just now that ever anybody had to do with. If I'd let her she'd talk, and talk about nothing, from the moment I pulls the bed-clothes off of her in the morning to the time when I blows out her candle at night. As I say to her, 'What's a virtue in the drawing-room is a vice in the kitchen.' Talking takes the eyes off the frying-pan. If you

don't know when to leave off talking you won't never know when to leave off frying. Besides, it stands to reason, clear and bright, that a tongue always wagging with words won't have the same taste to it as one that is always thirsting for the right flavour. No; one of the first maxims I teaches a young girl who comes to me for training is, 'Learning goes in by the eyes and ears; while the mouth goes to the stomach and not to the brain.'"

With this Mrs. Dumper, very nearly breathless, rubbed her right hand in her snow-white apron, and then presented it with a deferential curtsey to Beatrice and Christabel.

"I hope you think," she said, with a pleasant smile. turning round at the door, "that I take proper care of my two gentlemen. They're a dreadful anxiety! What with Mr. John feeding his pets in the rain, and Mr. Frank sowing his seeds in a East wind without a wrap of any kind-well, there! you can imagine what it is for a careful woman to have to look after them. They're that daring-well, there, I mustn't say no more. But, would you believe it," she added, coming back a little. "that until I come to look after them. nearly nine year agone now, neither of 'em had ever wore nor heard of a bed-sock in their lives! Now." she cried triumphantly, "they have three pair of the best white wool; their night things is put in the airing cupboard first thing of a morning, and only come out last thing at night, and during the winter they each of them has a hot-water bottle in a red-flannel jacket in the middle of the beds. But there, I mustn't waste any more of my coals, so I'll bid you good-afternoon again. And here comes Fluffy to call me," she cried, stooping down to stroke and caress the dog'so admirably described by Shorder as a square of white wool with four sticks at the corners. "Fluffy can't bear me to be out of the kitchen for one minute," smiled Mrs. Dumper. "He worrits himself dreadfully if I'm away. He don't seem to feel at home with a young girl. As soon as I go he pops into his basket beside the fire and whines as if he was crying; and if I stop away too long, why, he scratches at the door till the girl opens it, and then he daps along the passage to fetch me back again. Don't you, Fluffy, my darling?"

The brothers were exceedingly grateful to Fluffy. The dog, whatever its demerits, had diverted conversation from their night-things and their bed-socks. Mrs. Dumper's immodest withdrawal of the veil which ought always to hide a gentleman's private habits, had thrown them both into a state of hurt and shocked alarm. John had frowned and glanced aside; Frank had flushed under his bronze, and sought with apprehension the faces of his visitors. It was too bad of Mrs. Dumper. She really ought to exercise more taste in her conversation with ladies. An excellent woman; a very careful, honest, and capable woman; but really there were times when she made them almost angry with her.

They discussed the matter when they returned from seeing the ladies into their carriage.

"I wish to goodness," said John, in a quiet nettled manner, "that Mrs. Dumper would not parade our pyjamas in the drawing-room."

"She meant kindly, of course," said Frank.

"So thoughtless. Such bad taste," said John, coming to a pause under the verandah.

"I don't suppose there is anything immodest in

bed-socks," said Frank, "but her mention of them made me go hot all over."

- "Of course. Execrable taste. I am surprised at Mrs. Dumper. I thought better of her."
 - "Her intention was-"
- "Oh, of course," asserted John. Then, screwing his glass tighter under his bushy eyebrow, he said: "My dear Frank, a charming girl, that. What? Charming. What?"
 - "Oh, very, very charming."
- "Good form. What? Pretty; distinguished; elegant, reposeful. What?"
 - "She is a tremendous acquisition," asserted Frank.
- "Oh, of course. Such perfect taste in her dress. Such a dignity in her carriage. Such a quiet fascination in her voice. Don't you agree with me? A charming nature. She reminds me a little," he added, pulling down his cuffs, "of that beautiful niece of the Viceroy; up in Simla; you remember?"
- "I think Miss Haly is more charming," said Frank.

 "I think she is one of the most charming women I have ever seen."
- "Frank," said John, very solemnly, putting his arm through his brother's and leading him into the house, "I agree with you."
- "The wonder to me," said Frank, "is that she is not engaged to be married."
- "My dear fellow," replied John, very tenderly; "my dear fellow!" It was plain that he was very deeply moved, and Frank said no more about the matter.

They agreed together that Miss Haly was altogether delightful, and that they looked forward with much pleasure to seeing a great deal of her society. And in

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the evening, when John was reading aloud from *The Uncommercial Traveller*, Frank suddenly interrupted him at a perfect metaphor to say that they must remember to tell it to Miss Haly.

CHAPTER VII

THE BEGINNING OF REFORMATION

BEFORE winter came to Bartown-in-the-west Rodwell had shaken the indifference of that evil little town and roused it from its long and deplorable lethargy. He discovered day by day that the life of the place was worse than had been told to him. In the midst of its intellectual apathy and its spiritual deadness, vice of a horrible kind, only half hidden from the eye, flourished exceedingly. The wives of miners who were away in South Africa lived in utter disregard of their marriage vows; and even worse than this, it could be said of children of tender years, little girls of twelve and fourteen, in the words of the Farnabys' favourite author, that they "awfully reverse our Saviour's words, and are not of the Kingdom of Heaven, but of the kingdom of hell."

Rodwell's horror at the depravity of the town's life spurred him to tremendous activity. In the Wesleyan minister, old Simon Eyre—for whose wife he felt a great respect—he discovered a man whose only remedies for the dreadful iniquities of the people had such old-fashioned and futile names as "conversion," the "new birth" and "grace." He was a picturesque patriarch, this tall, bent, rugged-looking Wesleyan; he preached

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to a few fisher folk, sat much with his invalid wife, and spent the greater part of his day reading the works of outworn and evangelical divines. Rodwell liked him; he visited occasionally at the old preacher's cottage, and was always impressed by the graciousness of Mrs. Eyre; but he felt the futility of the old man, and was thrown entirely upon his own resources for the regeneration of the town.

His first advance was made through music. coming of the new organ excited interest in the town. and Philip Letheby week by week brought him fresh singers willing to be trained for the choir. Then it was discovered that among the men in Shorder's Works there was a fair number who could play modestly one Rodwell proposed the or more musical instruments. organizing of an orchestra. With the purse of Beatrice at his disposal flutes, violins, 'cellos and cornets were bought in London, and Bartown became possessed of an orchestra. The enthusiasm felt for Rodwell by these ambitious musicians spread among their fellows. Men slouched up to church to take a look at this new parson. He soon had the peal of bells clashing in the summer air. Practice nights became an event in the town's life. For half an hour and more the bells rang out their beautiful changes, and then the organ, the orchestra and the choir took up the strain. People came to listen to these practices, and nobody resented the brief prayer with which Rodwell began and ended them.

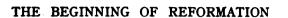
Again, it was the purse of Beatrice which enabled him to buy the best of magic lanterns and to keep up a perpetual supply of the most interesting slides. Once a week the church was crowded from end to end to see these pictures and to hear Rodwell's lecture. He took the people to the Holy Land, and made the life-story of Jesus real and convincing to them. He showed them the wonders of Egypt and Rome; he narrated the stories of great and noble men; he filled their eves with the colour and beauty of the earth: he gave them the history of the world's great paintings, sculptures and buildings. It was a new delight to them, this unfolding of history and art. They sang the hymns which interspersed the lecture with a rough vigour, and they joined earnestly in the prayers which sought from God the gift of love for things that are good and pure and high. There were many, thus early in Rodwell's career, to compare with contempt the old life of tavern, skittle alley, and street corner, with the new and intenser life of instruction, music, and art, which he had introduced.

The mining students called him "The Art Parson." He smiled when he heard the name, and accepted it willingly. He had friends among these well-off younger sons, many of whom were learning mining merely for something to do. Their chief faults were the faults of youth. They regarded all seriousness as an affectation. To deny the animal appetites was to confess oneself a prig. What parsons and goody-goody people called sins were actions natural and healthful to the body. Religion was a mere make-belief; it was extra to real life; people were religious who had failed to inherit the natural vigour of mankind. Any newspaper scandal in which a clergyman or a church-going person was concerned set them laughing with satisfaction at the obvious logic of their views.

Rodwell approached one or two of these men through the avenue of literature. They were inclined to regard books not included either in technical libraries or in

the library of a sportsmman as stuff of an effeminate kind. Poetry made them laugh. Anything connected with poetry suggested to their minds long hair and exaggerated sentiment. They found it as difficult to follow poetry as to follow a foreign language. Blank verse was Greek to them. And yet, though they were so far outside the courts of culture, they found it gradually a pleasant thing to sit with Rodwell in his beautiful study at night and listen to his talk. He had the gift of talking well. He stirred interest in a poet by some happy tale of which the bard was hero. He could always lay his hand on the right page when he wanted to read aloud some appropriate passage from novelist or essayist. He had met many men and seen a good deal of the world; his noble face, lit by a smile, was good to look upon while he talked quietly among the tall candles. There was even in the heart of young Godfrey Eyre, who came, it must be confessed, for the social advantage of meeting in Rodwell's society fellow students inclined to treat him with disdain, a growing affection for the Art Parson. Though the students, after taking their leave of Rodwell, would go with their pipes lit laughing about him into the Angel, or strut off two and two in search of wilder amusement in the town, yet there was always in their hearts for him an unexpected tolerance and the acknowledgment that he was a good fellow.

If he had been hail-fellow-well-met with them, if he had chopped stories with them and sunk the parson in the man of the world, they would have despised him. If he had talked religion they would have left him. But he was always the refined and educated man of taste, the man to whom vice and vulgarity were alike distasteful, and they caught from him



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gradually something of the infection of a pure and cultured mind.

He had made a particular effort to get hold of young Godfrey Eyre. This youth was of the over thick-set kind; his shoulders were too broad, his neck too thick, his arms and legs too solid. There was in his hard young face, with its small eyes and petulant mouth, a grossness almost revolting to the pure spirit of Rodwell. He boasted that he never read a book. He was always yawning and stretching himself. He said he was only properly awake on a football field. Singing he called "caterwauling." Picture galleries he only remembered as the cause of grievous headaches.

And this raw youth was threatening one of Rodwell's particular friends with shame and ruin. For among all the houses into which he entered there was scarcely one so pleasant to Rodwell as 5, Sunbeam Terrace, the crowded home of Captain Duck. Day by day Rodwell grew fonder of Captain Duck. The tub of a man, with his broad, pink, clean-shaven face and his clustering curls of sandy hair, practised a philosophy which greatly appealed to Rodwell.

"When a man is the father of nine," he would say in his slow and measured fashion, bringing each word up apparently from some abysmal depth of consciousness hard to get at, "it becomes him to cultivate the fruits of philosophy. And what I say, speaking from experience, is this: A man never knows how sweet is the second pipe of tobacco till he's denied himself the one before. Giving up is like anything else. It has its consequence. What is a consequence? It's a reward. There are good rewards, and there are evil rewards. Giving up is good, the Bible says so, and experience says hear-hear to it, and so the consequence

of giving up is good. I never knew, speaking from experience, what pleasant nice stuff is bread and butter till I had to go slow with the one and deny myself the second. Why, eating's a pleasure now! Take my neighbour, Captain Stringer. Does he enjoy his meals? Not him! Potted meat can't make his bread and butter a blessing to him; potted bloater couldn't do it; and it's my belief that not all the raspberry jam, and quince jam, and mulberry jam in the whole world could ever sweeten the natural sourness of his atheistical stomach."

Captain Duck's home was one of the plainest and simplest kind. Everything there was for use. Nothing had a place which was merely ornamental. It was, therefore, in its own way beautiful, and the simplicity and clean plainness were hallowed by the wonderful love of the father and mother. While Captain Duck would himself bath some of the younger children, hear their prayers, tuck them up in bed, and sit at their side telling marvellous fairy stories till they fell asleep, Mrs. Duck was never weary of spending herself utterly in the service of the family, contriving at every minute of the day some economy of the family purse and some fresh amusement for the home.

She was a thin little woman with large staring spectacles and a wide smiling mouth; one of those good women who roll down their sleeves unwillingly and sit ever restless on a chair. She had a kind voice, and Captain Duck called her ma.

Once when Rodwell called at Sunbeam Terrace in the morning he found Mrs. Duck packing various baskets with paper packages and bottles screwed up in newspaper, while Captain Duck, a child on each knee and three or four clamorous in front of him, was

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stimulating quite unnecessarily the excitement of his offspring.

"We're going on a picnic," said Mrs. Duck, smiling proudly. "The winter's gone, and we always begin the spring with a picnic. It's good for the children. They love a picnic more, I think, than anything else."

"Ma's a wonderful hand at arranging a picnic," said Captain Duck. "It's my belief, speaking from experience, that she dreams o' picnics all through the winter."

"Well, it requires a lot of thinking out," said Mrs. Duck, closing down one of the baskets and shooting the piece of stick through the catch; "it is not as if we had a donkey cart to carry any of the things. We each have to carry a basket, and so the packing and arranging for such a large family means a lot of thinking out beforehand."

"It's amazing to me," said Captain Duck, chuckling slowly, "how nature works out what I call a picnic pilgrimage. You take and observe it, Mr. Rodwell. The smaller the child the more he or she is set on carrying the biggest basket! They won't hear of ma and me taking the big ones. No, they give us the little ones, and pretty near kill their dear little selves carrying the big ones."

"But it generally ends," smiled the mother, "in Captain Duck's carrying all the big ones and two or three of the small ones as well."

"There you go, ma!" said Captain Duck. "Always spoiling my stories, you are. Always detracting from your own children, you are. Why, what an unnatural ma you are, to be sure!"

"And isn't Susie going?" inquired Rodwell, looking at the pretty girl who stood outside the group beside the window, the only one there without hat and jacket.

"Susie has got fair mazed on football," smiled Mrs. Duck. "She can't bear to miss a single match, though what she can see in the rough game, and she a girl, I can't imagine."

Susie blushed scarlet, and smiled weakly. She was very pretty when her face was in repose; a girl with bright brown hair, large and rather languorous brown eyes, and a complexion that was soft with youth and the moist enervating air of the west; but this pretty and even refined face, when self-consciousness took possession of her, became instantly weak and almost plain; its charm vanished at a stroke. The mouth widened, the body lost its carriage, and with hanging head, flushing cheeks, and eyes that ogled unprettily, she stood confessed as a silly and empty-headed child.

"My motto is," said Captain Duck, "that pleasure isn't to be forced on anybody. If Susie likes football, let her like football. There's plenty of others does that besides her. And if Susie would rather go to a football match than come a-picnicking along of us, why let her go to the football match. Why shouldn't she enjoy herself? She's a good girl. She works hard to help ma. It's only fair and right that she should take her pleasures as she chooses."

"Miss Haly would like to go to the match," said Rodwell, looking at Susie. He had told Beatrice that Susie was a child in danger, and Beatrice had promised to help her. "I wonder if you would take her. She would like, I know, to see the students play."

Susie said she was going with a friend—with Ellen Pengelly.

"Take Miss Haly as well," said Rodwell. "Do; it would please her."

"I dare say," said Mrs. Duck, "that Miss Haly

would take you both in that great big carriage of hers. There'd be a treat for you, Susie."

At this there was a weakening among the other members of the party in their enthusiasm for the picnic. They would like to drive in Miss Haly's big carriage.

"You do as you please, my girl," said Captain Duck.
"If you'd rather walk with Ellen, why, you take and walk with her. Mr. Rodwell will understand; and you can take Miss Haly another day, can't you?"

It was agreed, however, that Susie and Ellen Pengelly should call for Beatrice, and when Rodwell had watched the family start off on their pilgrimage, the smallest child sure enough carrying the largest basket, he turned to Susie at the door, and thanked her for promising to take Miss Haly.

"She likes you, Susie," he said. "She admires you for being such a helpful good daughter and such a good elder sister; and she likes you for yourself. She wants to be a friend of yours."

"I'm only an ordinary girl," said Susie, swaying and blushing.

Rodwell gave her his hand. "I want to be your friend, too," he said quietly. "Will you remember that? If ever I can help you in anything you will count on me, won't you? Good-bye, Susie. You must always be happy. Your father loves you so deeply."

He went down the little garden, entered the next gate and approached the house of Captain Stringer. He derived a certain kind of pleasure from these visits to the terrible atheist of Bartown. It was not the same kind of pleasure he got from visiting the happy family next door, but an intellectual amusement at the "little learning" of the redoubtable gentleman

who had taken his draughts at the Pierian spring in the shape of sixpenny reprints.

Captain Timothy Stringer was lean, tall and cadaverous; he lived in the company of three sisters, Emma, Sarah and Maria Stringer, all three of them equally lean, tall and cadaverous. They all dressed in black and had jet earrings and jet necklaces. Captain Stringer wore black. The picture frames on the walls of their parlour were black, the suite of furniture had black frames. The mantelpiece was black. On the hearth lay a large and ample wool mat of black. The sisters, whose crochet needles never ceased to click, worked always in black wool.

It must be understood that the sisters did not regard the visits of Rodwell with any favour. They were narrow religious people, and regarded the ecclesiasticism of the vicar with a far sterner dislike than the atheism of their terrible brother. If Rodwell should convert "the Captain" to the Church of England they were determined to leave him. They could not live in the same house with a member of the Established Church.

"Well, Captain Stringer," began Rodwell, when he had greeted the gloomy family, "I hope you are a little better to-day."

Captain Stringer, who was not unlike Herbert Spencer, and had a fringe of beard descending stiffly from under his chin, rubbed his hands slowly over his knees, and said that he was neither better nor worse. "In plain language," he said, "I am the same."

"This fine spring weather," said Rodwell, "ought to help us to take a bright view of everything."

"Sir," said Captain Stringer, who had the great Doctor's manner; "if the intellect is to be influenced

by superstition, it may just as well be influenced by weather. If logic is only for occasional use, and not the compass of life's voyage, then let a little warm air and sunshine transmute the pure gold of reason, and tell us that things are not what they are."

"But don't you think," challenged Rodwell, with a smile, "that fine weather ought to make us optimistic?"

"No, sir," replied Captain Stringer. "On the broad principle that everything is wrong, nothing ought to make us optimistic. If logic and reason can't make us optimistic, the weather ought not to make us optimistic."

"Now, I have often heard you say," Rodwell

observed, tempting him, "that everything is wrong."
"I lay that down, sir," answered Captain Stringer,
"as a broad principle. There's no arguing with a man who denies it. I refuse controversy with any man who disputes it. Either everything is right, or everything is wrong. I say everything is wrong. History supports me. Philosophy upholds me. Observation bears me out. I have Hackel on my side. If a man agrees with me that everything is wrong, I can argue with him."

"What do you mean exactly by wrong?"

"Sir." said Captain Stringer, sitting straighter in his chair and steadying his large hands upon his lean shanks, "I mean by the term wrong a condition of things not right. I say the earth is not right. I say man is not right. I say the whole cosmical system of things is not right." He drew a long slow breath, and resumed. "I survey the universe, and I see accidents. Meteors. Eclipses. Exhausted worlds. I survey the earth, and I see disasters. Earthquakes.

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Volcanoes. Glacialic destruction. I survey Man——Sir, in the presence of ladies it is not seemly that I should enumerate what I see in Man. If the ladies will leave the parlour——"

Here the three black sisters rose together, and in spite of Rodwell's protestations that they should stay, and that he would take for granted whatever Captain Stringer saw in Man, they stalked dreadfully and awfully from the room.

When the door was closed upon them, Captain Stringer folded his arms across his breast, fondled his fringe of beard with the fingers of his right hand, and declared that what he saw in Man was something vile and disgusting. "Sir," he said with some energy, "I behold a levity in the very form and shape of a man. Man is constructed on a risible scale. Take him out of his clothes, set him in the midst of the Sahaira, and what is he? I say there is more decency in a sparrow, and more solemness in an ox. What, then, can a rational creature expect to find in Man except vileness, looseness, and the off-scourings of contemptible evolution?"

"But," said Rodwell, "man is gifted with reason?"

"Not gifted with reason," corrected Captain Stringer; lowering his hands to his knees, and slowly drawing them backwards and forwards. "How do I regard reason?" he continued sadly. "I regard it as the expiring effort of natural selection to see the naked truth of things. Man himself has produced his reason in order to see and to know that everything is wrong. I respect my reason and I act up to it. Take my sisters; the three Misses Stringer; take them, sir. They are Wesleyans, and they can no more utilize their reasons they can lay eggs or go galloping across the pastha.

tures. They talk about 'sitting under' the Reverend Mr. Eyre. Sitting under him! Sir, I sit under no man. Here," cried Captain Stringer, raising his right hand and slowly and reverently passing it over his bald head, "is my reason. I sit under that. I sit under nothing else. If a man has got reason he ought to sit under it, and act up to it, and go with it wheresoever it takes him, even if it be into the wilderness of husks and shadders."

"Let us for one moment," said Rodwell, "take the case of your next door neighbour."

"Which one?" demanded Captain Stringer, in the manner of an accurate person perfectly willing to arrange terms and get to work on an argument.

Rodwell said he referred to Captain Duck.

"Very well, then," answered Captain Stringer, now we have got our terms exact, and we can proceed. Let us take Captain Duck."

"There is a man," began Rodwell, "who---"

But Captain Stringer stopped him. "On the broad principle that everything is wrong," he said slowly, "I can accept the proposition of Captain Duck being a man. Not otherwise. I don't call Captain Duck a man. I don't think of him as a man. I think of Huxley as a man, and Darwin as a man, and Hackel as a man, and Heagle as a man, and Charles Bradlaugh and Ernest Reenon as a man. I don't think of Captain Duck as a man. Whenever I see a gobbet of grease on the edge of my plate, I think of Captain Duck. That is what Captain Duck is. On the edge of that plate which is the cosmical scheme of things Captain Duck is a dollop of grease or a spot of gravy."

In vain did Rodwell strive to convince the melancholy atheist that the great qualities of heart which

made the character of Captain Duck so lovable and admirable in the eyes of his friends were ample atonement for his figure, his large family, and his carelessness as regarded his reason. Captain Stringer would not be persuaded. Only on the broad principle that everything was wrong would he admit into the same company as Hackel and Heagle the genial and self-sacrificing Captain Duck.

And the argument ended as arguments always did end with Captain Stringer. "You start, sir, telling yourself that everything is right—and right you'll make it in the teeth of fact. I start, sir, telling myself that everything is wrong—and wrong I make it in the light of reason. Mud was the source out of which everything evolved itself fortuitously. I don't say how the mud came about; I can't say; you can't say; no man can say. But surveying the Earth and Man, and the Universe, I tell you what I can say: I can say that neither Omnyscience nor Omnypotence had anything to do with it. There's more than just a mistake somewhere. Sir, the whole thing is an outrage to commonsense."

But Rodwell was not in the least cast down by the stubborn atheism of the old mine captain. It rather refreshed him than otherwise for the work of reforming Bartown. He was a tremendous worker, and Stringer acted only as diversion. Every day he rose early, and it was not often that he got to bed before midnight. He was so obsessed by his work that his visits to the Headland grew less and less frequent. It took time to descend to the town and to climb up the cliff on the other side of the river. He had no curate, he said. He must do everything himself.

And, as his health prospered in the fine air and as his

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work more and more made its impression, he began to feel more strongly than ever that outside of the Church there was no machinery yet devised by man which could lift up the fallen and save the weak.

He had proof of that every day. Although the influence of Tom Shorder who was a mighty hero in the eyes of his men, still kept a great many of the people from coming to church, yet Rodwell could feel, almost with every hour, that between him and the people there was springing up a strengthening respect and a sense of affection. They came to him in their troubles; he was made welcome in their houses; wherever he went in the streets he was respectfully greeted.

It is important to the understanding of this story that the writer should make clear this growing popularity of the young clergyman. Rodwell had not revived religion, he had not given the people any intimate sense of their spiritual destiny. On the face of things, and as he and others saw it—all except Mrs. Eyre and Beatrice, perhaps—he had made the people good and grateful Christians. They came to church; they flocked to his lectures and entertainments; they contributed to his charities; they supported him largely in all his schemes for brightening the existence of the town. In a word he had made them conscious of self-respect. Immorality, if it had not departed, at least pretended that it had given way to Respectability. and Looseness to Gentility. People now affected to look with horror on the women living bad lives, and mothers who allowed their daughters to strake about the streets were now spoken of in terms scathing enough to please the nicest Pharisee. As for the men, if they still sat in the ale-houses at night, their conversation often took a political turn, and they found themselves

getting interested in subjects which hitherto had been to them like matters of another world. And even in the Angel, the mining students and the young tradesmen of the town laughed no longer when Dick Vick addressed Joe Blund as his "poor degraded friend," but rather sat apart from the topers and viewed them from a new standpoint with something akin to disgust.

Rodwell's spell was the power of a refined and cultured personality. He was always living in the atmosphere of the best, and there came from him unconsciously a rebuke for everything second-rate and unworthy. In his presence men wanted to be their best. The least sincere of his admirers felt in his society a desire to show the better side of their natures. People affected in his society to be clever and interested in books. He went among the vilest, and they looked into his face and pretended to be clean. He went among the most brutal, and they looked into his face and pretended to be kind. His was a nature so benignant and gracious that it won homage from the hardest of men and the worst of women. Every one in his presence wished to stand on the same level with him.

It was to be remarked, however, that children did not go to him easily. There was not in his nature that warmth of attraction which wins instantly the confidence of the very young. He was, in fact, rather a friendless man. His admirers, people who looked up to him, people who respected him, people who spoke well of him and wished to be like him, these he could number in hundreds. But his friends, when he came to count them, dwindled to the one faithful heart of her who had been to him always as mother and sister.

He made this discovery after he had been a year

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in Bartown, sitting one day in the bedroom of Philip Letheby listening to a new Kyrie which the organist had just composed. It was a cold square room, the walls covered with photographs in oak frames, the tables, the top of the chest of drawers, and the mantelshelf littered with the apparatus of photography. On the bed even was a white enamelled tray with prints soaking in it.

Rodwell was fond of Philip Letheby. He had discovered that this engineer-photographer and musician, who spent his half holidays prospecting disused tin mines, was engaged to be married. The lady, whose photograph appeared not only over the bed-head but on the dressing-table and the organ and the mantelshelf and the chest of drawers, lived in a London suburb. They had been engaged for fifteen vears. Marriage was impossible. Philip Letheby earned only forty shillings a week as a draughtsman in Shorder's Works, and out of this income he had to contribute very largely to the support of his father and mother. The brass-plate of the old drawing-master still hung on the gate of the cottage, but no one ever came to him for lessons. On his annuity of a pound a week and Philip's wages the little family faced the world and struggled to keep up appearances.

Philip would sometimes set about saving money, resolutely and with "a long persistency of purpose"; but as soon as the scanty coins reached a spendable total he was sure to buy either a new camera or a new bicycle or such a useless article of furniture for a young married couple as his American organ.

Rodwell studied the delicate face of the clean-shaven young man, and wished to approach nearer to his heart. There was something deep and unfathomable in that

quiet nature, some secret and beautiful philosophy which kept him alike from peevishness and despair. Rodwell was not only curious: he wanted to have this man for his friend. He wanted in life some one with whom he could exchange the multitudinous thoughts of his heart. But this youth lacked something. It was not only want of culture and want of some class instinct. There was something in his nature lacking, without which Rodwell did not wish him for his friend.

"Some men," Rodwell thought, as he listened to the organ, "are born perhaps without the instinct for friendship. I have never been boon-companion with any one. No one has ever had the heart of me or given me anything of his heart. Besides Beatrice I doubt if I have what is called a friend in the world."

Besides Beatrice!

He was sitting near the window which looked over the roofs of the fishermen's cottages, over the little harbour with its lighthouse at the end, over the mouth of the river with its line of storm-bent booms in the waves, and across the sand towans to the lonely big house on the cold green cliff which stood up so majestically to the sky.

The window was open, and as Letheby searched among his manuscripts for a chant he wanted to play, the long-drawn whispering sound of the little waves, breaking slowly like ripples on the shore, came tenderly and sadly to Rodwell's ears. The quiet air entered to him like a sigh from the sea. Far across the dark blue disc of ocean the scarlet sun, drawing about him, like robes, purple and crimson clouds, moved slowly to the dawn of Southern shores.

Besides Beatrice there was no one.

For a moment he forgot the parish. For a moment the enthusiasm for recreating the town died away from his mind. He felt in his heart a desire for her society. He wanted to be near her. He wanted to look into her grave and quiet eyes. He wanted to hear her low and musical voice. It was days since he had seen her. She was his friend. The need of her friendship was insistent. His loneliness made him feel cold. Through his veins ran a chill which made him shudder, as though a cold wind had suddenly entered through the window.

He got up from his chair, and went to Philip at the organ. "Never mind now," he said, laying a hand on his shoulder. "Another time. I will go and bid your people good-bye."

He went down into the sitting-room where old Mr. Letheby was lying on a sofa beside the window, watching the sunset with fading eyes. His long white hair and flowing beard fell about the shawl round his shoulders and gave the tone of old ivory to the extreme pallor of his face. Mrs. Letheby, sitting by the fire, awoke from a sleep as the door opened, and with a cough intended to suggest that she had been awake all the afternoon, hastily took up the book in her lap, and lowered it again as Rodwell entered.

"The summer is coming to make us all feel better," said Rodwell, bending over the invalid's sofa.

The old man endeavoured to smile, and his eyes went sadly back to the sunset. "A beautiful world!" he sighed, in his weak voice, lifting a hand with labour and pointing to the sky. "A beautiful world!"

"All the universe has beauty," Rodwell answered softly.

The old man sighed deeply, and half shook his head.

"A beautiful world," he said, as though to leave it and go out into the night was a thing bitter to be borne.

Rodwell bade the old couple good-night, and passed out of the cottage.

His heart felt a longing to escape from its own loneliness. He would go to Beatrice and look in her eyes with this new feeling in his heart. They would draw closer together. They would renew their friendship. He must not let the parish come between him and this single friendship of his life. All the confidence of his heart, all his secret thoughts and all the guarded privacy of his personality, should be given to her. He would no longer be alone. For her, and for her alone, he would be rid of this reserve and this long self-centred introspection which made him friendless. ceived of a new splendour to be won from human friendship. He and Beatrice would exalt friendship and make it the glory of the earth. To be her friend, to have her for his friend—this would consummate the desire of his soul.

As he went down the path to the ferry he criticized himself for having made so little deep and permanent use of her friendship. He had thought of it only in connection with his work and his difficulties. He had never thought of it as a thing sufficient in itself, never considered it as a thing personal to himself. But he would be worthy of that friendship now. Had he not felt as he sat at the open window listening to the sigh of the tired waves that he wanted to be near her, that he wanted to look in her eyes, that he wanted to hear her voice?

Yes; but he started as his heart revealed to him suddenly the deeper truth. He wanted to be near her; he wanted to contemplate the serenity of her counte-

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nance and to hear the tranquillity of her voice. But there was something more than that he wanted.

He wanted the very heart and soul of Beatrice.

With eyes shut and with ears stopped, so that he could neither see her nor hear her, he should yet hunger for her. It was not enough to be near her. He wanted to possess her. He wanted to love her. She had something to give him more wonderful, more beautiful, something infinitely deeper and more profound than friendship.

As this truth came to him he stopped and his face grew white. He stood, like a man who has heard terrible news, looking across the slowly filling river. His face was grey, his lips were drawn, and his eyes were filled with pain.

He turned and went sadly away from the ferry with his back to the setting sun and his face to the church.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VOW

ON a beautiful summer evening late in the July of his second year at Bartown, Beatrice and Rodwell sat in the cliff garden of the Headland with their faces to the sea. The shore was hidden from their view. Over the low granite wall of the sloping garden their gaze met only the trembling blue of a full ocean. Occasionally a gull wheeled lazily in the soft air and fell gradually on stretched wings to the water. In the haze of the horizon a steam trawler could be seen moving slowly along the edge of the world.

They had been talking in the heat of the afternoon about a Rest Home which Beatrice was to set up on the cliff for sick and ailing home-workers from the Borough. Mr. Jevvers, consulted in the matter, had replied proposing himself as a visitor to the Headland, stating, in excuse, that he had business with Mr. Colver which would keep him a few days in Bartown. They had been talking of the building and of the coming of Mr. Jevvers, and now that the two subjects were exhausted they sat in silence looking at the sea, and feeling in their faces the breath of a fading day.

She had observed in Rodwell during the last few months signs of the great change for which her heart had waited so long and so patiently. She knew that she was now less entangled in his consciousness with all the schemes and undertakings of his work. She knew that he had come to regard her detached from everything but herself. At last had been born to him the realization that she was dear to him for herself.

In her presence he was no longer at ease and voluble with his priestly business. He sat often silent. He looked at her with the steadiness and self-forgetfulness of contemplation. Sometimes he would speak to her of her own life, and question her concerning her hopes and occupation. Chiefly she was aware of this change in him by his silence and his frequent contemplation of her.

A quiet gladness took possession of her heart as she experienced this gradual deepening of his affection. She felt it was now safe to trust her soul with the hope that her long vigil was drawing to its close, that her reward was at hand, and that the love of the man she reverenced was at last to be given to her. How she could help him then! In the wonderful patience of her nature, a patience which seemed to reflect the hush and stillness of eternity, she waited for the flowering of his love.

In the midst of the silence, she turned to look at him and found that he was contemplating her face. He did not remove his eyes at once, and for a moment they looked at each other. Then he said to her: "I shall miss you dreadfully when you go from here."

- "I have not thought about going," she replied.
 "What makes you suggest it?"
 - "But you will not stay here always."
 - "Why not?"
- "You mean that you are content to stay here always?"

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"I am happy here," she answered, with a smile. "Is it wise to run away from happiness?"

They were silent again, and she turned and pointed to her left, away from the town to the great open world of the cliffs where the sun was then hanging in his curve toward the sea. "There is nothing on earth so fine as that," she said quietly. "Ten miles of cliff without a house or path. It is a kinder world than the Borough, Richard!" After a pause, she added: "You are so busy in the town, you have hardly made acquaintance with the sea and the moors."

"Shall we walk along the cliff?" he asked suddenly.

"If you wish it," she answered, and rose with him from the bench.

As they passed out of the garden, and walked slowly forward on the cliff with their faces to the sun, she felt in her heart the assurance that the hour for which she had waited was at hand. Her lips were smiling.

"Beatrice," he said to her suddenly, "I wish I had the strength to ask you to go away."

"You wish me to go?" she asked quietly; and the smile went from her face.

"No; I wish you with all my heart to stay. But——" he paused, and then looking away from her, he said, "I ought to wish you to go."

"Why, Richard?" she asked. "Can you tell me why?" The mother in her heart went out to him. He was in trouble, deeper trouble than she had guessed. She must help him.

He fenced with the question. "You have your life to think of. You give so much of it to me and to others. It is not fair to yourself. I think you ought to go back to London."

"But, you have forgotten the vow we made as

children," she said, as the smile came back. "You were always to be a clergyman; and I was always to be your district visitor. I like to keep my promises. In keeping this one, as you know, I am very happy."

"You have always been my friend; but now--"

He did not continue. "But now, Richard?" she questioned "What has happened to change it?"

"You have become a temptation," he answered.

"What does that mean? A temptation?"

"It means that you are making me love you."

"I want you to love me."

"You are making me love you as I must not love you."

"You cannot love me too well to please me."

"That makes me suffer."

"How, makes you suffer? The thought that you love me satisfies everything in my heart."

He turned quickly and looked at her. "You love me, Beatrice?" he cried. His heart was beating and his face was as white as death.

"I have always loved you."

"I love you; but I must not love you," he cried, as though the words were torn from him. "I need you; but I must not need you. I cry for you; but I must not cry for you. Do you understand? Oh, Beatrice, do you understand? All the love in my heart is crying out for you, and I must silence it. I cannot silence it when you are near. That is why I ask you to go away. It will be easier for me when you are not here. It will help me if you go away. Help me, Beatrice. Go away; leave me at any rate until I have got the victory."

She stopped and confronted him with her quiet eyes. "What is it that you set between us? What is it that

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keeps us apart, Richard? I do not shrink from telling you that what I most long for in life is the love of your heart. I tell you that quite frankly. I knew that one day love for me would be born in your heart. The hour has come. I have waited for it. Why can you not give me that love? I have told you that I love you: tell me why you will not take my love?"

"I must not take your love," he answered. For a moment she thought he would fall. He put his hands to his eyes, and swayed. "Let us go on," he said, hoarsely, walking forward again; "it is easier for me to say what I must say when we are moving. I will tell you. Beatrice, everything in my heart." She saw how his mind agonized, and how doggedly he set himself to get command of his feelings. She knew now that he loved her, knew that love had come to him then for the first time. "I had the gift of your love when I was too young to know its value." he murmured, after a long-drawn silence. "In youth there is a vanity which prevents perception. I was self-centred. I was ambitious of my future, I lived in my brain. Then came enthusiasm for Oxford, and enthusiasm for the Church. It was a pure and good enthusiasm; I wanted to escape from myself and to spend myself for others. You remember how we renewed the vows of our childhood? I was to be a great parish priest, and you were to be my friend and fellow-labourer. How enthusiastic we were! But at the very beginning of that life scepticism came to me. I was chilled by the men with whom I found my life was to be spent. I went over the vows I had taken and found them narrow and mean. I examined the Church whose service I had entered, and found that it chilled me. I was in orders. and without enthusiasm for the Church. In the midst of my difficulties I did not think of you. I never even told you. I went back to my friends at Oxford. I felt that I had blundered. I went abroad: I tried to get rid of the burden of doubts. It was in vain. My doubts pursued me. I came back to England, still without rest, and found you working at the Mission. I joined my service to yours. I knew you to be my friend. I was always happy in your society, but I was too heavy with the burden of my soul to realize that your love was my life. Oh, Beatrice, I have only now found that out. I told you that I was in the wilderness, and that sufficed you. You never teased me with questions. Then came a gradual conversion to the view that all my doubts were as dust before the great fact of the Church's existence. I saw things in their true proportions. I bowed myself and accepted the call of my childhood. To be like Paul, to put aside my intellectual difficulties and to surrender my intellectual conceits, became with me, in my slow and careful manner, something of a passion. I found everything in the Church. Through all this, Beatrice, I was still selfcentred, still blind to the gift you held in your hands, waiting to bestow upon me. I was glad at the prospect of working as a parish priest. I was glad when you said you would come and be with me. That was all. You were my best friend. You were my true companion. I renewed my Orders. I renewed everything." He paused. "I did not understand what you were to me." Again he paused. "I renewed my vow of celibacv."

He ceased suddenly, and she felt her heart grow dreadfully cold. "You did not tell me that," she said, quietly and steadily. "I did not know."

"Hear me, Beatrice," he cried, turning to her with

sudden energy. "I love you to the height and depth of my whole being. I love you with a hunger and thirst of spirit. The thought of life without you is colder than the thought of death and the grave. The thought that you love me fills my soul as sunlight fills the earth. You exalt me, you crown me, you flood my heart with passionate gratitude. But, Beatrice! Beatrice! while I love you to the edge of an exceeding agony, I believe in my vow."

"It is part of your life?"

"A part of my religion."

"You must keep it."

"It is impossible to break it. Every year I must renew it."

"Then, we will go on with our life," she said quietly. "It is good to know that you love me as I wish you to love me. I shall be happier now than I have been before. You will keep your vow, and we will go on with our life; we shall be better friends, closer and more sympathetic friends. That will make us both happy. There is no need for me to go away. We are better friends."

"The keeping of a vow," he answered, "is shared by the mind and the heart. I can keep my vow in my mind. I cannot keep it in my heart. To the last day of my life I shall love you and wish to have your love."

"Let it be so," she answered. "It has always been so with me."

He looked at her as she spoke, and saw the patience of her eyes, the long-suffering and tender compassion of her lips. It broke down all the guards he had set about himself.

"To be loved by you is such a happiness that I can

hardly speak," he answered. "Beatrice, I am filled with wonder and reverence. I could bow at your feet. Beatrice, Beatrice! I love you now as I never dreamed of love. I am exalted by it. There is not any void in my being which is not filled with worship of you. So great is this love that it does not seem to break but rather to fulfil my vow. It is love of the soul, it is a passion of heaven. As I stand and look at you, you incarnate for me something precious of Deity. I cannot any longer ask you to go away from me. Stay, and let me worship you. Be near me always. Do not go away from me. Stay—yes, stay and help me to keep my vow."

"In my heart," she answered sadly, "is only the song of Ruth."

"As I look at you, and as I listen to you," he said, "it seems a beautiful thing to be martyred by your love."

"If such a love as I would give you is a sin," she answered, "be martyred for its sake, and become the saint of love."

"Sin is a harsh word," he said.

"Ah, yes! But your vow forbids my love."

"My vow commands self-sacrifice. Beatrice, I must sacrifice my love. Agony of agonies, I must sacrifice my love!"

Her eyes shone, and she spoke with pride: "Such love as I would give you could not come between God and you."

He put his hands before his eyes, and spoke through clenched teeth:

"The Church speaks to me out of her long experience. Who am I but one of her million children?—my life and its heartache will come to an end, all my hopes and sorrows will be laid in oblivion; but, she will go on still calling through all the ages for men to offer up the sacrifice of their lives in her service."

"Is it for the Church or for the Master that you offer the sacrifice?" she asked quietly.

"He is in His Church. Beatrice, the very mention of His Name tells me in the midst of my love for you that the sacrifice is wise and good. Let us make it together. We have received the gift of desire for the devout life; we are in the world but not of the world; we have given up the world and we have found what is better than the world. Life is not for either of us what it is for those who do not know devotion. Beyond this earth, there are other worlds. Out of this life begins eternity. Surely, if we strive, we can make of our love, make of the sacrifice of our love, a thing happy to our immortality."

His devotion to the Church was strong and steadfast. Seldom there came to shake the strength and steadfastness of that devotion the vision of ecstasy which sweeps the difficult hours of mortal existence into the eternal unity of immortality. But now, much moved by the love of the woman, there came to him one of these sublime moments of ecstasy which hitherto had only visited him, and that rarely, at the altar. He lost all dread of temptation with all feeling of his humanity and breathed immortal air. In this uplifting and supersensual emotion, which only saints and martyrs experience to its height and depth, he felt it was good to acknowledge and to deny his love, to take it and to lay it down, to cherish it and to sacrifice it. He was happy in the thought of his pain. His self-denial was a new possession infinitely pleasant to him. The Church was an agony, but a Divine agony. He

turned to her, the ecstasy shining in his face, and said that they would make their love immortal, that for ever he would love and she be fair.

"It is only for a little while," he cried, "and then for all eternity, in every state of existence, we will go together working out the purposes of God."

Her soul had deeper depths than his, and she lived closer to the secret of the universe. There was no need for her to send her soul outside of herself in order to catch glimpses of God's eternal purposes. In her human heart was the infinity and the eternity of God. She could feel the nobility of a conception of love which saw before it, at the altar of earthly denial, eternal fulfilment. She had never thought of her love for him except as a spiritual devotion which would never end. But to sacrifice love without cause was to her, not only like the self-inflicted wounds of heathen fanatics, but a denial of God's dearest manifestation, a wilful shutting out of sunlight and sweet air.

She had nothing in her heart so great and divine as her love. She knew of nothing which so kept her from the world and so drew her into communion with the unseen. It was her life and it was her religion.

He felt it to be loyal to sacrifice his love; she felt that it would be traitorous not to fight for hers.

"If you ask me not to hope for your love, here on this little earth," she said, "I cannot give you that promise."

He was hurt, dreadfully hurt, by what he deemed her failure to share in his ecstatic vision; "I am not master of my life," he said. "I have given myself. I am held in pledge." Your love for me, and my love for you—do you realize how I love you!—is a temptation calling me from the Cross."

- "Is there in my love anything which would alter your life?"
 - "It would break my vow."
- "Is there in it anything which would not help you?"
 - "No; it would help me."
 - "Why, then, is it a merit to live without it?"
- "I do not say it is a merit. No, Beatrice, it is a pain, it is a life's agony. How can I convince you? How can I make you know my agony? Now I feel more than ever how long and how difficult will be my waiting for release. But I am sworn: and while my heart cries out for you, my soul tells me that the vow is good, and must be renewed every year. Oh, Beatrice, I could invent now a hundred reasons why I should break my vow, why in our case marriage would deepen and sweeten existence, yes, and profit the Church for which I work. But if I yielded I should still feel that for others the celibate life is right. It is the life of the Church, the great example of the Church—the giving up of that which is most dear to us."

He looked at her with entreaty in his eyes. "You must feel, Beatrice," he pleaded, "how dangerous it is to interpret the great Catholic doctrine of self-sacrifice from one's own individual circumstance. I dare not trifle with that first and greatest of doctrines. To give up a little is not enough. Everything must be yielded." He looked away across the sea. "We cease to be individuals when we surrender ourselves to the Church. In her eternal existence we lose our little lives. There must be for the priest a greater heaviness in the Cross which he takes up in order that others should follow. I do not call it a merit to live

without your love. God knows, God knows, it is a heavy burden."

"Let it be as you say," she answered gently. "But. Richard, let me tell you how I see this matter. I want you to know what my heart tells me. We will walk on a little farther. It seems to me," she said, moving slowly forward, "that everywhere on the earth the chief struggle of life is not to grow richer and not to grow merely better, but to deepen and develop love. It seems to me that everywhere God is calling men and women to the work of exalting human love. I think the real end of evolution is towards greater and deeper love. Well, then, I must reverence my love. It is very faithful, very strong, and very pure. I cannot regard it as something to be denied in order that I may reach to better things. It is my best. Through my love and by my love I receive into my soul everything which makes me desire an eternal destiny, everything which helps me to think of my Creator as the end of my being. This is how I see my love; it leads me to Heaven. In your eyes there is something else. In the midst of the path of your love you see the Church. Are you quite sure, are you quite sure," she repeated slowly. "that the Church does not shut out Heaven?"

He told her that he knew her love was of the noblest and divinest nature, and he told her that to take that love and hold it before the world would make his life better and more useful to mankind. But the Church had delivered him from unrest, the Church had provided him with the only vocation which could give him peace; and one of the vows which he had taken upon himself in her service was that vow which denied even the high gift of human love in order that the Church should present to the world in the lives of her

disciples the most complete and unquestioning example of self-abnegation. It was only in the Church that he could be happy with Beatrice's love. Out of the Church, even her love would fail to save him from disquiet. And as he was in the Church, and as his life was devoted to the service of the Church, he must be faithful to one of her oldest ordinances and live without his highest human happiness.

"You have brought me," he concluded sadly, "to the greatest and the last sacrifice of my life. I thought I had given all. I find that until now I had given nothing."

She perceived, as she listened to his eager words and watched the stress and agony of his beautiful countenance, how he struggled with words to bring her to a point at which she could see with his eyes a divine purpose in this oblation asked of him by the Church. He wanted her to feel an enthusiasm for tradition. He wanted to create in her an enthusiasm for the Church. He spoke of the vast antiquity of the vow of celibacy. He spoke of the age and experience of Church discipline. It was as though he strove to make her see in the Church, and in the traditions of the Church, something which should suddenly make her cry out that human life was nothing.

"I think I know," she said to him, "how you see our love. It is enough for me that you have felt love for me, and that you know of my love for you. Let it rest there for the present. We have succeeded to-day in deepening our friendship and widening our confidence. Henceforth we must draw nearer to each other; and even if till the end our closeness is only the closeness of friendship, that will be better than yesterday. But I must make terms with you for this

friendship. On your side it is to be friendship with self-sacrifice. I know that you wish to remain constant to your vow, that your whole intention is to keep that vow. For my part, I give you friendship with hope. I cannot yield my hope that one day you will come to me, your vow outworn and your soul free, and ask me for my love."

"But, Beatrice," he cried, "do you not see what you ask? My sacrifice is my religion. If you hope for a broken yow you hope for a lost religion. Do you

want me to lose my faith?"

"No, dear heart," she cried, lifting her face and with a sound almost of triumph in her voice; "I want you to find your faith. I believe, as surely as the sun will come over those hills again to-morrow, that one day you will come to me with a greater love in your heart and a greater faith in your soul." She paused, and regarded him with a calm sweetness and a deeper patience. "Now we will go back," she said, smiling. "We will turn our faces away from the sun—till another day."



CHAPTER IX

CONCERNING SUSIE, AND TELLING HOW SHORDER GOT HIS BLOOD UP

CAPTAIN DUCK was so proud of his nine children that he almost regarded the constant squalling of the three youngest as a beautiful and natural obbligato to the psalm of thanksgiving which rose from his heart in a perpetual orison to heaven. Mrs. Duck, for her part, was so taken up with the business of managing economically the little overcrowded home in Sunbeam Terrace that she was scarcely ever aware either of the quarrelling or the grumbling of her vigorous progeny.

But it was different with Susie. Nature had endowed her neither with the contented disposition of her father nor with the vigorous taste for affairs which characterized her mother. She was not passionate, she was not in the least vivid or rebellious. It was rather her natural deadness to excitement or interest of any kind which made the home life in Sunbeam Terrace tedious and irksome to her.

She found the rooms small; but she would have found little to amuse her in a palace. She was not attracted by the grubby children; but she would have been bored by the children of the rich. Her father's contentment and her mother's self-sacrifice made no appeal to her admiration; the perfectest father and the most lovable of mothers would have roused in her no gratitude. It was really not her fault. She was torpid by nature, and her mind had not been trained to amuse itself. Civilization had done nothing for her. She was least unhappy when she was idling in the streets with her hands in her jacket pockets, and she was least uninterested in life when she had a penny fashion-paper to spell through.

Godfrey Eyre, in forcing himself upon her company, had suggested to her the possibility of amusement. She was not in love with him. She did not think that he was clever or agreeable or good-looking. But he took her a little out of herself. He paid her compliments which pleased her, and he made efforts to hold her hand or to put his arm round her waist, which she found it a little exciting to resist.

There was no one else. There were some who looked at her and even called after her, but they were of commoner clay. There was no one so well dressed and of so good a social station as the son of the Wesleyan minister. She was a little proud to be attended by him. It pleased her to hear him speak with amused contempt of his father's chapel, and to brag about the fine friends he was making among the mining students. In some measure he unlocked doors for her in the wall of possibility.

"I shall go out to South Africa in a couple of years," he would say, "and come back five years later rich enough to marry you and give you a great time."

"You don't want to marry me," she had said to him over and over again. To which he had always made answer: "You wait and see, little beauty."

One evening they were walking idly across the tow-

ans, out of sight of every house except the Headland, which was far away on the opposite side of the river.

"You're always with Miss Haly now," he said, looking at her and pinching her arm. "Why did you bring her to the football match?"

"You're always with Mr. Rodwell," she answered, hitting at his hand, and moving down to the shore.

- "He's not a bad ass," said Godfrey. He kicked up the loose sand with his right foot and followed her to the shore. The wind blew in their faces with a taste of the sea. "I meet a few decent fellows at the vicarage, that's why I go there. If you want to know why I go to church it's because I want to see you, my little skylark!" He thought that Susie looked very pretty, with the wind blowing her hair about, and her cheeks flushed by the salt air.
- "What does your father think of you going to the Church of England?" she asked.
- "I don't ask him," laughed Godfrey. "I don't consult any one about my doings. No; I'm master of my fate, brown eyes. I do what I like. I don't allow any one to interfere with me."

They stood for a moment, looking out to sea, with the wind driving at their eyes, and the sun lying broadly across the troubled face of the waters. It was lovely -earth, sea, and sky; but they had said nothing about They were scarcely aware of it. the scene.

"I suppose," he said, turning to her, "that Miss Haly is trying to make you good. What a lark! Fancy my naughty little Susie growing good. Lord!"

"I am good," she answered. "What do you mean?"

Godfrey laughed. "Don't say it!" he said. "If you get pious you'll lose your dimples, and I shan't love you."

"What's Mr. Rodwell trying to do to you?" she asked, taking his stick to draw a face in the sand. "He's trying to make you good and decent. You'll be wearing a blue ribbon in your coat before another month. Won't you look dashing!"

Godfrey laughed, and pulled her hair. "Ah!" he said, "you wouldn't like that, would you, little Susie? You wouldn't like to see me going to Sunday School with my eyes turned up and a six foot Prayer Book under my arm? Not you, you wicked little darling. You're made for wickedness, and so am I. Don't you fear about Rodwell. He's only trying to make me go in for books. I don't mind that. I prefer footer; but a book's not so bad when there's nothing else on. When I read love poetry, Susie, I think of you!" He paused and put his hand to her elbow. "It's cold here," he said, as she jerked away from him; "let's go and get out of it, and I'll tell you how I love you."

They walked away from the sea, moving with extreme difficulty over the loose sands of the towans.

- "Take my arm," he said, as she stumbled.
- "Not me!" she answered, running on ahead.
- "Why not?" he demanded, catching her up, and with his arm round her waist running her down a steep sand bank.
- "Because it's not right," she replied, breaking away from him and running ahead.
- "Right be hanged!" he answered. "Why, you'll be saying next that kissing isn't right."
 - "No more it is," answered Susie, "unless—"
 - "What! not right? This isn't right?" With a

laugh Godfrey drew level and suddenly caught the breathless girl in his arms, and holding her so that resistance was impossible, kissed her as she ducked her head to avoid him. "Not right?" he asked. "Oh, Susie, how I love you! Aren't my arms strong? Can't I hold you? I could break every bone in your body. Kiss me, you pretty dear. Just once. Kiss me, Susie! Don't keep bobbing your head about. Let me have one honest kiss from your lips."

"Let me go," she cried, "you're spoiling my blouse."
She raised her face to utter these words, and he kissed her before she could dive again.

"I'll tell my father," she said, pretending to be

angry.

"One more," he said, but she kept her head away.

"Look at that!" he cried suddenly, in pretended alarm. She raised her face quickly, and he kissed her as quickly. Then he let her go, and laughed to see her stumbling through the sand.

"You're a rough brute," she said, flinging down his stick, and putting her blouse straight with trembling fingers. She turned on her heel. "I won't go out with you again," she said, with her hands at her hat.

That was all she had to say.

Try as one may, it is impossible to make romance of this dialogue. To Susie a great love was impossible; to Godfrey Eyre a fine love would have been something to laugh at. It is one of the saddest facts of life that in all our great cities as well as in the most primitive of villages there are thousands of lovers who cannot imagine the joy of a great passion and who are perfectly contented with this bantering horseplay of Godfrey and Susie. As she walked away from him she felt pleased. Her huff was affected. He had



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won her admiration because he had taken advantage of his physical strength. She had the pleasure of feeling mastered.

While this scene was being played on the sand towans, an event of a more startling kind was taking place in the town itself. Beatrice was crossing the square, when Shorder, with his hands in his pockets, and no hat upon his head, came out from the Works and greeted her with his usual cheerfulness.

"You look shocked about something," he said. "What has happened. Joe Blund inveigled the parson into drinkin' tots o' rum?"

"I've just heard a most horrible thing," she said.
"Poor Mrs. Vick. That wretched husband of hers has been beating her most cruelly."

"My dear Miss Haly, that's an event of the most usual occurrence," he laughed. "Why, it's rather a red-letter day when he doesn't box her ears or pull her hair for her. What would you? The fellow's a rascal, and she's a fool. They're cat and dog, hammer and tongs, all the time."

"I think it is perfectly horrible," she said.

"And perfectly usual. You see, my dear lady, Mrs. Vick is one of those obstinate mules who believe in workin' out repentance. She could go back to her brothers or her sisters; but she won't. She could go and live by herself; but she won't. She could have the divertin' pleasure of my society; but she won't. She says 'I have made my bed, and I must lie on it.' That's the kind of woman she is. You can't help that sort. They're built on the sufferin' line. I believe they half like it."

"But the man, the creature Vick!"

"What about him?"

"Can nothing be done to him? Can't somebody bring it home to him what a coward he is?"

"There's only one thing that would move a man like that. Words are no good. Parson Rodwell might preach till he was plum-coloured in the face, and you might shoot scorn at him till your eyes ached. He'd only laugh. What he wants is a thundrin' good lickin'."

He stopped, as he was speaking, and looked towards the *Angel*. "Here he comes, with old Blund to keep him company. Look at him! Did you ever see such a rat?"

Beatrice looked at Vick with all the scorn she felt for him. "He is a brute," she said, with tense indignation. "Some one ought to tie his hands, or lock him up."

"Vick!" called Shorder, looking away from the proud and scornful face of Beatrice, and struck by her sudden accession of indignation. "Come here; I want you."

Vick and Blund checked, and stared at him with a dazed surprise.

Beatrice was inclined at first to move away; but she waited, ready to speak wise words to the exhuntsman if he gave her the opportunity.

"You don't seem inclined to hurry," said Shorder, who caught the infection of Beatrice's wrath. He saw the man Vick in a new light. He saw him from the point of view of a good woman. A stride or two brought him in front of the two men. He looked hard at Vick. "I believe it would do you a power of good," he said, slowly, "to have your nose pulled. Ever tried it? It's what happens at school to bullies. It's like this."

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Before D. V. knew what had happened, Shorder's thumb and forefinger had his nose in a vice and, squealing like a pig, he was jerked suddenly forward and as suddenly swung back off his feet. In an instant people in the town appeared to be aware of the excitement. Faces appeared at windows, tradesmen came to their doors, and dogs charged barking and yapping into the square.

Beatrice turned and walked away.

An angry cry made her look back almost immediately, and she saw Vick running forward with Shorder in pursuit kicking him hard. People were crowding round the square. She saw Captain Duck laughing all over his face. Then Vick turned and made a savage rush at his tormentor. Shorder burst out laughing. "Why!" he called, "you mistake me for your wife!" He smacked the wretch's face hard with his open hand, and then grabbing him by the collar swung him like an empty sack over his shoulder, and walked forward laughing. Boys and girls crowded at his side; young men rattling sticks noisily in their hats called out after Vick to look out for his eye; dogs charged in and out among the stragglers barking madly, and one of their number, a long badlybred collie jumped up at Vick and made grabs at his dangling legs. There was great delight among the wives who followed after Shorder. "Give it him, Squire, he wants it bad," they cried. "He's a bad one, he is: he'll deserve all he gets."

"You're drunk, Vick," said Shorder, as he reached the bridge. "Why man alive, your head's like a hot cinder. What's the matter with you? You want coolin'."

He took him to the centre of the bridge and then r.v.

turning his own back to the stone wall, he loosed his grip on Vick's collar, gave him a backward push, and over went the husband of the Honourable Mrs. Vick into the river below.

It was low water, and on either side of the channel stretched a goodly width of smooth black mud. The people pressing behind Shorder, and the later ones who came breathlessly running on to the bridge, had the amusement of seeing Mr. Vick slipping, floundering, and half sinking in his desperate effort to cross the evil-smelling flat of mud.

Shorder did not stop to see whether Vick swam or sank, but calling to him, "Every time you hit a woman, I'll serve you the same," he pushed through the people and made his way in the direction of the square. At the end of the bridge he encountered Dr. Blund.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" shouted Blund, looking round at the crowd for sympathy.

"What! you old limb of the devil!" cried Shorder.

"I'll send you in after him for half a farthin'."

"I hope he'll bring an action against you!" shouted Blund, violet in the face. "You deserve to be prosecuted. You might have killed him. You're a violent man. You're a danger to the town. You ought to be put under restraint. Where's Pedro? Where's your keeper?"

Shorder's face hardened, and he took a step which brought him close in front of the furious and terrible old doctor. People held their breath, seeing the look in his face, and Blund quailed before him. "Only your wicked grey hairs," he said slowly, "save you from a heave of my toe that would send you



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from here to Jericho. You old gin-sodden goat! You old brain-fuddled tavern gossip! Listen to me, old sinner!" he cried, with sudden energy. "If you don't mend your ways, you and Vick as well. I'll kick you clean out of the town. I'll turn you both out of my houses; understand? Dare to preach to me? You! Why, you're the scum of the earth. You're the dirty waste of the world. It's only religion protects old beasts like you. If nature ruled the earth, you'd be put in the stocks for a month, and then you'd have a stone slung round your neck and find yourself slippin' through thirty fathoms of clean sea water. Preach to me. would you? I'll preach to you. I'll give you the truth. You're a dirty, black-hearted, lily-livered, gin-oozing old rascal. That's what you are, Doctor Blund. Go to the parson, and he'll tell you your soul's in danger of hell fire. Come to me, and I'll tell you that you make the air smell for clean men who take a bath every day and keep themselves tight and corky. Go, and get into a bath of steamin' water; take a cake of soap and rub it into you; wash yourself, old Blund, wash yourself. You're an offence to the winds. Your palate's an insult to wheaten bread and ripe apples. You're like a wheezy old hound with its teeth droppin' out. You ought to be poisoned. You ought to be put under sixty foot of earth. Listen to me. If you don't behave yourself better to your wife, you and Vick as well,—law or no law, I'll knock your heads together, and I'll hoof you clean out of the town. Take and mark what I say. You've put my blood up. I shan't forget it. Every time you come near me you'll be in peril of my boot." He waved his arms with disgust. "Pout /" he exclaimed, turning away his head and wrinkling his nose; "you pollute the air!"

When he had delivered himself of this violent eloquence, which had flowed like an angry tide over every attempt at interruption from its victim, Shorder continued his walk in the direction of the square. He did not, however, find Beatrice there. At sight of the people running with laughter after Shorder and Vick, she had walked away towards the harbour, and near the towans she had met Susie and Godfrey Evre returning from their walk.

"I'll be off now," said young Eyre, as he saw Beatrice approaching. "Don't be cross any more, Susie. It doesn't suit your style of beauty." He laughed, and nodding to her, and taking off his cap to Beatrice, he turned aside, and made his way over the hill to the town.

the town.

Beatrice's thoughts were taken away from the wretched man Vick by this encounter. She had learned from Rodwell of his fears for the poor pretty dull girl, and she had already endeavoured gently to wean her towards a position of greater security.

"Well, Susie?" she said, to the blushing child.
"You've been walking on the towans?"

"For a few minutes, Miss Haly."

- "I expect you find time hangs rather heavily, don't you?"
 - "It does sometimes."
- "I wonder," said Beatrice, after a pause, "whether you would like to learn needlework?"
 - "I'm not very clever at it."
 - "But if you were taught."

Susie was silent.

"Don't you think you would like it?"



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"I'm not very fond of it."

"I mean beautiful needlework."

Susie was silent.

Then Beatrice said, passing her arm through Susie's: "If I were you, Susie, do you know what I would do? I would try and learn to be very clever with my needle, and then I would try and earn a nice little income by it. Wouldn't you like to be so clever that people came to buy your work? You might, perhaps, begin by working for Miss Penderwick. I daresay you could earn quite a nice income in making pretty dresses."

"I should like that," said Susie.

Beatrice was striving to save her by the simplest and most human of devices. She saw that the child was not wicked, but stupid; that her danger was not frailty, but idleness. She was objectless. Great objects and divine ends would appear far away to her. But to make money, to be independent, to be thought clever,—this would begin the creation of self-respect.

So she told Susie that she should be taught needlework and dressmaking, and Susie grew grateful and happy at the prospect. As they went along, Beatrice talked presently about the evening's sky, and tried to give Susie an intelligent interest in nature. The child was not irresponsive, and Beatrice was surprised at her quick eye for colour and form.

"Why, Susie," she said, "you are something of an artist!"

"Susie blushed very red. "I like talking to you, Miss Haly," she replied; "you don't laugh at me, and you're kind. But the other night coming over the hill with two or three girls, I just happened to

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say, 'O look at the sunset! isn't it beautiful?' and what do you think they said to me?"
"What, Susie?"

"Why. 'All right. Don't faint!'"

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CHAPTER X

MR SHORDER MAKES A FRIEND

RS. BORROWSBIE, the higgler, carried through the countryside the fame of Richard Rodwell. Where railways did not run and the carrier came only once a fortnight, Mrs. Borrowsbie made her slow but regular way, collecting poultry, butter, cream, eggs and honey, and spreading gossip. Hers was a notable figure. In a small spring-cart, with the seat well forward to permit of hampers and baskets at the back, the genial and enormous widow sat poking her little donkey's rump with a stick, pulling at its mouth with the reins, and pouring into its long and twitching ears every passing thought that entered her mind. It was as pleasant, as it was a familiar sight to see against a blue sky the handsome black bonnet and the snow-white apron of Mrs. Borrowsbie coming over the hills on a summer day.

"We've bought twenty dozen o' eggs, Joseph," she would tell the donkey; "seventeen couple o' chicken, twelve pound o' butter, my dear, and nine pound o' the best cream. Come up, Joseph, you little fusty crawler, do!" Then she would rattle the money in the pocket of her apron, and lean leisurely forward on her knees. "Mrs. Banthorpe down at Bartown's wore to a shadder. Ah, that new parson's the

feller to make things move. He ought to get hold of you, Joseph! He wouldn't treat you so kind as I do. Why, she's three stone lighter if she's a pound, and the colour's gone out of her cheeks like a running dye. Pilkin isn't the same man either, my dear. Did you notice him, Joseph? He don't drag his leg so much as he used to do, and he don't 'Mr. Pilkin' himself nothing like what he did. Ah, but I'd be mazed to see the parson get hold of Dr. Blund, and take a bit of something out of him. Wouldn't you, Joseph, my dear? Ah! There's a wicked man for you. There's a rebellious soul. Oh, the wickedness of him, Joseph! The downright bad wickedness of him!"

All these ruminations of Mrs. Borrowsbie continued with scarce an interruption from the moment she mounted the little spring-cart early in the morning to the moment when she clambered down in the evening at her cottage door. When she stopped to higgle with a customer, she interspersed the higgling with just the same gossipy remarks, merely continuing the flow into human ears which before had been poured ceaselessly into donkey's ears.

So it gradually came about that in all the neighbouring parishes the fame of the Art Parson spread from week to week until he was quite a figure in that part of the world. The clergy came to see the new light, and villagers journeyed across the hills to hear him preach. He became the centre of a little band of earnest and devoted Church people, working together for the awakening of religion in the West.

There were noble qualities in Rodwell's mind, even though there was nothing of a large humanity in his heart. His character was a fine one, his per-

sonality was a powerful one. Beatrice could not have loved a small man, and she loved Rodwell. But his attraction for those who now gathered about him, young clergymen keenly devoted to the Church and her great traditions, was purely intellectual. They saw in him a man of force in whom the historic sense was strong, a man whose energies and gifts were devoted to the one end of restoring to the Church the power of direction over men's lives. They followed him as men follow an intellectual force in politics. He had been one of Jowett's "Minds" at Balliol. They saw in him a leader of a movement. It was because he exalted the office of the priest and promised to restore the authority of the Church that they came to him.

Rodwell, thus surrounded and thus applauded, found his day full with business. In addition to the services in his church, in addition to all his visiting and lecturing, he now had his diary full of engagements to preach and lecture in the outlying parishes of his friends. He threw himself into this work, he told himself, to forget his love for Beatrice. But if he ever thought of his love for her now it was with the sweetness of resignation. He was the leader of a movement. It was right that he should suffer.

But Beatrice was not surrounded with disciples, and she had no office to exalt. She was fond of visiting among the fishermen; she found real pleasure in Dickensian conversations with the Farnabys; and the Duck family surrounding her, Susie hanging always on her arm, amused and delighted her. She had tried in vain to be received by Mrs. Vick, and the Colver family bored her. Poor Mrs. Blund had become something of a nuisance.

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There were long hours when Beatrice was by herself, and in those hours she thought of human life and saw it with clear eyes. Her love became more precious to her. She could see in all the fret and fever of the world nothing comparable with love. Love was the crown and glory of existence. It summed up and embraced religion. For a woman service could express itself only in love. To give and surrender herself to this emotion and in this emotion to find her highest self was the end and aim of a woman's life.

One morning, soon after the arrival of Mr. Jevvers, when she had walked her horse beside that impeccable solicitor to the edge of the down leading to Mr. Colver's house, and bade him farewell as he set off on his business, she turned her horse's head and went for a canter across the hills in order to be alone with her thoughts. She had not seen anything of Shorder for several months. Gifts from The Hangers still arrived every day for Miss Christabel Taylor, gifts first of all of trout, then of asparagus, and now of strawberries, peaches, grapes, and apricots. He had gone away once again with Pedro on his yacht, a sailing vessel, and no one appeared to know when he would return. "He often goes for a week," Frank Farnaby had said, "and stays for a month."

But Shorder was in her thoughts as she cantered across the turf. She had heard more and more rumours about him. He was said to be a wicked man and a cruel man. That he drank deeply she did not doubt, but that he was wicked she could not believe. He was godless; but in this she felt sorrow for him; it seemed to her a sad and pitiful thing that people should live outside the great and sovran reality of existence. But there was something else in Shor-

der; there was a tragedy. What it was she could not discover. People said that he lived under the fear of madness, that the foreign body-servant who never left his master was in reality a medical man charged with the observance of Shorder's mental changes. Beatrice half believed this story. Like Rodwell she had observed the strange Spaniard who looked after Shorder, and she could not bring herself to believe that he was an ordinary valet. At the same time she doubted that he was a doctor, and could not believe that a man so small and so altogether weak in comparison with the gigantic frame of Shorder was of any possible service as a keeper. She found herself perplexed by the problem of the servant, and interested in the personality and tragedy of the master.

She was surprised in the midst of her thoughts by seeing Shorder riding towards her from the end of the down. He had come across the fields, and was walking his horse. She brought Marco to a walk, and went forward to meet him. She kept her eyes upon him as they approached each other, and saw that though his face was more bronzed and his eyes clearer than when he went away in his yacht, yet there was a melancholy and a hardness in his countenance which hitherto had only appeared there at rare intervals and then but momentarily.

As they greeted each other he made an effort to be himself, laughing in his boisterous fashion as he inquired if Christabel had got married during his absence to John Farnaby. "I hardly know the town," he said. "Your parson is turning everything upside down. I hear that everybody goes to church now, and that the landlord of the *Angel* is going bankrupt. Splendid!

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'Earth's but a pilgrimage, Heaven is our home!' What do you think of it all?"

"I share your delight," she answered; "only mine is more real, perhaps."

"Wait till I get hold of the parson," he laughed.

"I am waiting till he gets hold of you."

"What! Get hold of me? That parson?"

"Why should you hold aloof from him? Why don't you let him try to make you happy?"

He turned to look at her, blank astonishment in his face. "Really and truly," he demanded; "really and truly do you think that he could influence my mind?"

"Your heart."

"A phrase. Men talk of the heart who have surrendered their intellect."

"So Captain Stringer says," she answered.

"Ah, but let Rodwell convert old Stringer. Why not? Stringer is a man; Stringer has an immortal soul. It doesn't do for a parson to laugh at Stringer. If the Miss Colvers have souls and old Pilkin has a soul, Stringer also has got a soul. It's in danger of eternal punishment. Let the parson save it. By the Lord, it would be more modest if he started on Stringer before he thought about anglin' for me."

"Why are you so antagonistic to Mr. Rodwell?" she asked. "What has he done to you?"

"I'll tell you somethin', Miss Haly. I've only spared Rodwell, because he is a friend of yours. You know that I could take his life away from him easy; well, I could just as easily take his faith away from him. I am the stronger man. I could absolutely destroy Rodwell's faith and leave him without a rag of creed. Would you like me to try?"

- "Why do you want to take his creed away?"
- "You keep bringin' the matter back to me. I'm talkin' of Rodwell."
- "You said you have only 'spared' him because of my friendship. What is it makes you wish to destroy him?"
- "Oh, that's disposition," he laughed. "It's a hobby of mine to go for humbug, specially humbug in a black coat."
 - "There is something else."
- " Are you one of those people who assume know-ledge in order to pump secrets that don't exist?"
 - "I am sure there is something else."
- "Say what it is, then; for I hate all beatin' about the bush. What is it that makes me hate parsons, any parson under heaven, except a constitutional scorn for superstition and cant? Miss Haly, I wish you dealt honester with me. I like you as much as anybody here. I could make almost a friend of you. But, somehow or another, you will keep makin' me feel that you want to get at me, want to save my soul and all the rest of it. There's no friendship on those terms. We can never be easy together. Why on earth can't you give up assumin' things, fishin' for things, hintin' at things? Take me as I am, a plain man who sees the world as it is and knows life with the long experience of the human race. Don't keep mystifyin' and jugglin'."
- "I don't think I am hinting at any mystery," she said quietly. "I feel that your antipathy for religion is worth a better reason than Captain Stringer's. I'm trying to find what that reason is, because in my own weak way I should like to help you. It seems to me that I discover in your mind a disquiet which is not

purely intellectual. You are not satisfied with life. You say you see the world as it is; yes, perhaps; but you are not in love with it. You are not a happy man, Mr. Shorder."

He burst out laughing. "Forgive me," he said. "for savin' that it is charmin' to hear your pretty views. Not in love with life? Of course I'm not. Only a fool is. Why, every philosopher who ever lived has hated it. But, in the name of everything that's reasonable, why must it be necessary to discover any mysterious cause for disgust at the business of life? Schopenhauer hated life. Hartmann hated it; everybody who has really examined the subject has reached the same conclusion. You don't suspect them of a romantic reason; why should you suspect me? But. for pity's sake, don't let us argue. One thing you have said pleases me, and by your leave I'll stick to that. You said just now you'd like to help me. That argues friendship. I'll take your friendship. You shall help me."

"Very gladly."

"There's no romance!" he laughed. "You won't build on that, will you? All I shall ask of you, later on, is a little ordinary act of friendship. Don't think of me as a mystery. I'm a rough honest man with his life lived in the open for all eyes to see. As for religion, let that subject be tabooed by both of us. I'll spare Rodwell for your sake. I won't force him to use his brain honestly and confess that his whole scheme depends on two suppositions which are provably false. I'll let him go on bamboozlin' himself and the people. For myself you shall know now why I have nothing to do with religion. Religion depends on two things. First that God is a good God. Second that man is immortal.

The cackle of theologians about Transcendence and Immanence don't interest me. Both of those words mean absolutely nothin'. They are the words of a madness which seizes the brain directly it tries to escape from the natural and visible order. They can't apply to anythin' we know. But even if the words had any human meanin', their value would still depend upon the two suppositions, a good God and immortality for man. Those suppositions are false. If there is a God he is not so good as a good man; if man is immortal his memory must be indestructible. Man's memory can be destroyed; his identity, his personality, everythin' that makes him a person, can be taken from him with the tap of a hammer. He is not immortal. That is why I don't like religion. Why I am opposed to it is this; it sins against the honest laws of nature; it perpetuates the weak and unfit; it messes up laws with maudlin sympathy; it rots the stuff of fact with the fever of diseased imagination. Instead of lethal chambers for the criminal, we've got hospitals for the diseased. There it is in a nutshell, the cause of my antipathy." He burst out laughing. "Don't say I haven't given you grounds, and don't search for any other mysterious cause. It's all there, on my honour."

[&]quot;Why not talk these things quietly over with Mr. Rodwell?"

[&]quot;By Jove, do you want me to?" he demanded. "Ves."

[&]quot;Do you think he can alter me?"

[&]quot;I think," she said slowly, "that you might help him."

Shorder pulled up his horse. "Don't you like him, then, as he is?"

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She had stopped too, and met his eyes. "You could help him," she said.

"To change his faith for mine?"

"No, for mine."

"For yours! What, isn't it the same as his, then?"

"Do you think it is?"

"You go to church."

"How do you judge a faith?" she asked.

"I don't know."

"You can judge it only in one way."

"What is that?"

"By the life."

" Well ? "

"Your faith does not bring you happiness. His does not bring him peace."

"Doesn't it, by George? And yours, what about yours?"

"I am content."

"What is your faith?"

"Trust in God."

"Well, then, what is Rodwell's?"

"Trust in the Church."

Shorder did not see the enormous truth in what she said. He laughed, saying lightly: "And mine, I suppose, trust in the devil! Very well, then. I'll have a go for Rodwell. And in the meantime we are friends. Shake hands over that."

She gave him her hand, and as she did so, over his shoulder she saw, standing behind a clump of gorse on the edge of the down, Shorder's foreign servant watching them.

"Tell me one thing, if I may ask it," she said quietly, as they moved forward again. "Is your valet——?"

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"Pedro!" said Shorder looking back with a frown, "Is he here then?"

"He was over there a minute ago," she said, point-

ing with her whip to the clump of gorse.

"Ah, he is waiting for me," said Shorder. "I have kept him. He is very polite, my poor Pedro," he added laughing; "he would hide behind a brick rather than appear to be watching us."

"Us!" said Beatrice.

"I beg your pardon," laughed Shorder. "I should have said, his master. Farewell, my friend! Remember, we are friends." And with that he turned his horse's head, and trotted away to the edge of the down.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH, AMONG OTHER MATTERS, ROD-WELL TELLS HOW HE DEALT WITH SHORDER, AND SHORDER TELLS HOW HE DEALT WITH RODWELL

BEATRICE and Christabel were taking tea in the garden at Gun Cottage and listening to more of Mrs. Dumper's maxims, when Rodwell was brought as far as the lawn by the servant with the short dress and the small bun.

As he advanced, Mrs. Dumper prepared to withdraw. "And now here comes a gentleman," she said, "whose business talking is, and who won't be best pleased to find me wasting coals; so I'll bid you good-afternoon, miss, and if," she added, lowering her voice, "I can be of any service to you in what you've just asked me, which is finding a good servant-girl for the vicarage, I will do so. One of my maxims is, miss,—A promise unkep', is a chimney unswep'!"

Here, bobbing her head to Christabel, the good lady almost left off talking, and backing away prepared to walk past the vicar with an expression of face which denoted first a polite oblivion of his presence and second a determination to appear surprised if he should fulfil her hopes by stopping her and giving her a fresh excuse for talking.

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"Well, Mrs. Dumper, how are you?" asked Rodwell; the Farnabys, who had walked to meet him, now walked on, took their seats in the cane chairs under the shade of trees, and engaged the ladies in talk.

"Afraid to see you, sir," she said, taking his hand, with a polite bow, and a little smile. "But you know. sir, when you've got two such risky gentlemen to look after as I have got, you'd be the first to say that churchgoing is a luxury, and must be like the little titty bit of sayoury after the dinner. Duty first, pleasure next. And I hope you do believe that I regard it a pleasure to sit down in church after a week of hard work and hear the pretty music and the comforting words of the sermons. But you know, sir, I hardly ever get a moment to be out of doors. Once a week I drive Poppy into Cowey to buy the stores for the week, and there and back I'm fretting myself all the time that my two gentlemen are committing suicide and the girl's setting the house on fire. Between ourselves, sir, not wishing to retrac' from anybody's character, I daresay that you'd be all the more comfortable yourself. sir, if you had a housekeeper who followed one of Mrs. Dumper's maxims, which is—' Think of yourself and there's dust on the shelf.' I'm always thinking of my two gentlemen: I'm thinking of them now, and one of Mrs. Dumper's maxims pops into my mind, which is, sir, 'The tongue that rolls is a waste of coals.' I'll bid you good-afternoon, sir; and I'll hope you'll enjoy the cream-splits and the pastry on the tea-table which has all been made, sir, every bit of it with a glass rolling-pin and a fairy hand."

With this, Mrs. Dumper bobbed and marched majestically towards the house, leaving Rodwell free to join the others round the table under the tree.

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"I have just left Mr. Jevvers and Mr. Colver," he said, when Frank Farnaby had given him the cup of tea which John had poured out, and was bringing a plate for him and a dish of Mrs. Dumper's creamsplits. "I am sorry to say," he added, with a smile, "that Mr. Jevvers has so interested and involved my churchwarden in the toils of Mammon that he no longer feels himself adequate to the task of churchwarden." He went on to explain that he had called upon Mr. Colver concerning the increasing business of the church and had found that gentleman so indisposed to add to life's business, that he had felt himself bound to accept the suggestion of Mr. Colver's resignation.

"But how troublesome for you!" exclaimed Christabel. "Just when the parish is beginning to go so nicely, too."

The brothers shared in this sentiment. Beatrice smiled because Rodwell was smiling, and because she guessed the object of his visit at Gun Cottage.

"The duties are too heavy for one man," he said, "I am thinking of having two; a vicar's warden, and a people's warden. I should like to get two brothers to act, two brothers living together and always ready to help each other."

John looked at Frank, and Frank smiled weakly at John.

"Don't you think that is a good idea?" asked Rod-well of Beatrice and Christabel.

"An excellent idea," said Beatrice.

"Why, our hosts are the very men for you!" exclaimed dear Christabel with the enthusiasm of one who sees sudden illumination through the bars of a gate. "Now, who could be better than Mr. John

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Farnaby and Mr Frank Farnaby? They are brothers. They live together. They are always willing to help each other. And they are sound Churchmen. I declare if you had asked me I could have thought of no one else."

"I'm afraid," said John, and stopped.

"We should be delighted, of course, if——" said Frank, and stopped.

"You see," said John, "we are very busy men."

"And there's Mrs. Dumper," said Frank.

John looked at him. "Upon my honour, Frank, I cannot really see what Mrs. Dumper has to do with the matter."

"She thinks we do rather too much as it is," said Frank weakly.

"There are other reasons," said John. He frowned at the grass under his feet, pulled down his shirt-cuffs, and pursed his lips. "We do not desire," he said, "to figure in any way as public men. We live retired lives. We entertain modest views of ourselves. We have many hobbies which keep us constantly employed."

"At the same time," said Frank, "if we could be of any service to you, we should of course——"

"Of course," said John.

Rodwell would not take their No. Very gently, with Beatrice to help him, he wrestled with the modesty of the two brothers, overcame it, and finally prevailed upon them to emerge from their retirement into the fierce light of a churchwarden's public career.

"You really do feel certain," asked John Farnaby privately of Beatrice, questioning her through his glass with a very solemn eye, "that I am a suitable person for the office? If you think so, I will certainly

try. But I should like to know if you really do think I am capable of it."

"I can think of no one so proper," said Beatrice.

"Really? Well, I'll try. It's exceedingly good of you I'm sure to have so high an opinion of me."

"Now," said dear Christabel, "you have only got to rid yourself of Mrs. Banthorpe and that impertinent and awkward lame sexton of yours, to have the church in a thoroughly efficient state."

"I know of no situation more pathetic," smiled Rodwell, "than that of a poor clergyman tied to an incompetent housekeeper and a heathen clerk."

"And that kind of person never dies," said Christ-

abel.

"We must help you," said Beatrice, smiling. "Mrs. Dumper is going to find you a good servant, and perhaps Pilkin will be content to be pensioned off. In any case with two such good wardens, there is hope of reform on every hand."

"I am not quite sure," said Christabel, her face assuming its most acrid expression as she approached a joke, "whether it is quite respectable for the churchwardens to live in the luxury of a Mrs. Dumper while the vicar starves on the poisonings of Mrs. Banthorpe."

Although Rodwell and Beatrice applauded this admirable jest with smiles, and played with the idea for a few minutes as a most romantic and beautiful proposal, it sank seriously and deeply into the hearts of the brothers. When Christabel had been packed into the carriage, and Beatrice and Rodwell had started off to walk home, John and Frank strolled slowly round and round the garden, asking themselves whether it would not be a fine sacrifice on their part, whether, indeed, it was not a manifest politeness on their part,

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to surrender Mrs. Dumper to the vicar. And finally they agreed to consult Mrs. Dumper; and entering the house that lady was requested to favour them with her presence in the sitting-room.

The proposal was begun by John, taken up by Frank, and finished by Mrs. Dumper.

"What you mean, Mr. John, sir, and what you mean, Mr. Frank, sir, is that I should take Polly and Fluffy and go and live at the vicarage, leaving you two here to kill yourselves in the garden and poison vourselves in the dining-room. That is what you mean. You may wrap it up and flavour it and disguise it with words over which I have no command. but what you mean is what I've said; and my answer to it, if I haven't forgot my spelling, is a word of two letters. Mr. Rodwell is well-meaning, but he's a clergyman; and while I despise Mrs. Banthorpe as a cook or a housekeeper, she has my sympathy as a woman. For, Mr. John, sir, and Mr. Frank. sir. the woman that has to do for a clergyman earns her heaven by living of her earthly life in the other place beginning with the letter Haitch. What with meals at all hours, and missionary meetings interfering with the housework, and the front doorbell going all day with beggars, drunkards, and distric' visitors, why, sir, I say it's a life that would turn the brain and break the heart of any sensitived and highly conscious woman. No, Mr. John, and no. Mr. Frank; turn me out of doors and leave me to starve by the roadside with Fluffy and Poppy, you may; but transplant me into a vicarage and distort me into a clergyman's martyr, you may not. If I do not give satisfaction,—and it's one of Mrs. Dumper's maxims that 'Cooks could do what they wish if they served the palate with the dish',-

you had better inform me of such in unmixtable language, and I'll prepare my books and request you to examine my cupboards to see if every pennyweight of stores isn't exactly in its place and in a perfectly fresh condition. But if I do give satisfaction, which I have no reason of doubting, perhaps you will not unsettle me with revolutions and upsettings, but leave me to keep my hearth tidy and my shelves dusted."

Beatrice and Rodwell as they walked towards the Headland, little guessed the wonderful sacrifice which the brothers had contemplated, nay, had actually brought themselves to the point of making. Rodwell was telling her about his difficulties. First there was Dr. Blund, who had taken to borrowing money from him; secondly there was Mrs. Vick, who obstinately refused to let any one break the loneliness of her martyrdom at the hands of D.V., and thirdly there was Shorder, whose influence still kept a great many of the men at the Works from sharing in the new enthusiasm for the Church.

Dr. Blund was drinking harder than ever. When he could scrape money together he paid for himself, when he could not he sponged upon Vick. The two never left the Angel at night until the last minute, always they were heavy with drink, sometimes they were so intoxicated that they made their way through the streets of the sleeping town laughing and shouting and singing. People had complained to the policeman, the policeman had spoken to the landlord of the Angel, and the landlord had warned the two topers. But the thing went on. They were never in their sober senses. Once, to ingratiate himself with Rodwell and in the hope of borrowing more money from him, Joe Blund, with his hairy purple face and his humped shoulders,

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had made his appearance in church, and had fallen into a snoring sleep to the scandal of the congregation. His wife still clung pathetically to her belief that a few patients would restore the doctor to his former self-respect. She went about the town, where she was heavily in debt, with a proud carriage, gave her orders to tradesmen with the air of a well-to-do person, and paid calls with the courage of a woman acceptable to everybody. And yet there was scarcely a child in the town who did not know that every night this little woman slipped quietly out of the dark house and polished the brass plate, announcing Dr. Blund's degrees, which hung on the railings.

"Last night, I hear," said Rodwell, "a van called at the house and went away with some of the furniture. It must mean the workhouse. The desperation of the

thing is that no one can be of any help."

"The man Vick is not quite so bad," Beatrice said. "Could you, through him, get influence over Dr. Blund?"

"Vick is much worse," answered Rodwell. "No appeal can reach him. He is a stronger and a healthier man. Drinking does not break him down as it does Blund. He glories in his situation. They tell me he is always talking of 'The Honourable Mrs. Vick' in the bar, making horrible fun of her, and boasting that he has beaten her a score of times."

"She will let no one see her."

"The two wives are equally brave, but in quite a different manner. Poor Mrs. Vick cannot brazen it out. She might be living in a nunnery. No; we cannot reach her in any way. I have written again and again, but the same reply always comes back, she sees no one."

"You must not be discouraged, however," said Beatrice. "You are having wonderful success. The town is a different place."

"It is moving," said Rodwell. He turned and looked at her. "A great deal of my success is due to you. You have been splendid, Beatrice.

"Have you seen anything more of Mr. Shorder?"

she asked, interrupting him.

"Oh, yes," he laughed; "the man is quite hopeless. He is hopeless because he is so stupid. It is only serious, his futile life, because of his influence on others."

"Has he told you his views?"

"Quite openly. He is materialistic with the materialism of fifty years ago. His mind seems unable to move. I have tried to make him see light, but he keeps the blinds down and the shutters closed. Appalling, his ignorance."

"What are his views?"

"Oh, they are hardly worth mentioning. He takes the view that the struggle for existence and the laws governing evolution argue a Force that is non-moral. He cannot see a God in the universe. The old stupid idea of nature red in tooth and claw, rides him like a nightmare."

"How did you answer that point?"

"The answer is so very simple. The struggle for existence is not only a struggle of the weak against the strong, it has not even been good business for the strongest animals or the cruellest races of men. It is much more than a tooth and claw matter. The struggle for existence has among other of its fruits, the wonderful love of the mother for her child and the sacrifice of the father for his son. That is a part of the

struggle for existence. The stage of tooth and claw has been passed. Evolution is proceeding. The only advance now is along moral and spiritual lines. Besides as I tried to make him understand, if he sees in the suffering of the world the work of a non-moral Force, to this same non-moral Force he must ascribe the love and self-sacrifice everywhere evident in the world. He cannot take all the mud, and leave all the sunlight. But, his mind is a chaos of wrong-thinking!"

"You answered him well, then?" she asked, turning for a moment to look at him, to study his face.

"He is also persuaded that personality consists of memory, and that memory is a purely physical activity! He told me that he could take away my memory with a single cut of his hunting-crop across my skull, and then he asked me with all the confidence of an alehouse politician where my immortality would be!"

"How did you answer that?"

"I told him that I could knock all the music out of his organ with a pennyworth of gun-cotton, and asked him if that would therefore destroy the music in his mind."

"What did he say?"

Rodwell shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, it was all very much below interest. The poor fellow is suffering from a little learning. He is a stage or two beyond our local apostle of sixpenny reprints. That is all. A stage or two."

"But you like him?"

"He certainly interests me more than his views do," answered Rodwell, coming to a pause. "There is some mystery about the man. I can't make out what that Spaniard has to do with him. His mother doesn't come near the place; and none of his sisters. I think

he drinks too much. It is a great nuisance having such a man in the place."

He gave her his hand, and left her to climb the cliff by herself. When she was half way up she paused and looked back. He was walking with Captain Duck on one side and Philip Letheby on the other.

She thought that he was deep in church matters, or that he was listening to some of Captain Duck's talk about tin mines; and wondered with a little pain in her heart how long it would be before he came to her with his heart hungry for love. He was so far away at present from the best he could be. She guessed that he suffered in the denial of his love, but she knew that his passion for the Church was a balm to his wounds. He was possessed with enthusiasm for institutions and traditions; he was not yet human.

In all that he had said, so hurriedly and impatiently, of Tom Shorder, there had only been intellectual pride in his ability to answer argument. Where was the yearning in his heart to soothe the ache in Shorder's life? Where was the love in his heart for the pain and sorrow of Shorder's soul? Would he never learn humanity? Would it always be the Church; never man and life?

She had hoped that Shorder might break in him reliance on his intellect, and throw him back on his heart, there to find the only security for his faith and his happiness. She had been wrong. The controversy had only increased his assurance, his satisfaction with his own intellect. He and the Church were secure against all attacks.

On the top of the cliff she came suddenly upon the

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Spaniard Pedro, so suddenly that she was almost startled.

He came towards her, raising his hat.

- "May I speak to you?" he said.
- "What is it?" she inquired.
- "Will you let me speak to you privately?"
- "You can speak to me here. What is it?"
- "The Señorita does not understand. I can speak here. Yes. But may I speak privately?"
 - "What do you mean?"

He spread his little fat hands and shrugged his shoulders. "I do not speak English very well. I mean; what I speak, will you tell no one? I speak privately."

She studied his face, and saw how the small prominent hard eyes shone with a kind of glaze, and how the long broad lips had an expression of habitual scorn. He was short, fat, high-shouldered and yellow; a man who once might have been strong, but was now gross and plethoric.

"I certainly can give you no promise not to repeat what you say to me," Beatrice answered, "until I know what it concerns. What do you want to speak to me about? What is the subject?"

- "I wish to speak about Mr. Shorder."
- "Well?"
- "You must not tell him."

She eyed him with a quiet indignation. "You forget yourself and you forgot your duties," she said. "You must not attempt to speak to me about your master."

- "Stop," he said, as she moved away.
- "I shall have to tell your master," Beatrice replied, turning to look at him, "that you have presumed to speak to me about his affairs."

Pedro showed his teeth in a smile. "Do you think I am afraid of him?" he asked.

Beatrice walked on. The man drew level with her for a moment. "I warn you, señorita, to be careful. You can frighten Mr. Shorder with me; but you cannot frighten me with Mr. Shorder!" He laughed, nodded his head several times, and let her go on ahead of him. "Tell him!" he called after her. "It will make me laugh."

All thought of Rodwell was put out of Beatrice's mind by this amazing encounter with the Spaniard. She was first of all indignant, because of the man's audacity, and then she was full of sorrow for Shorder, feeling now assured that in some way a mystery did poison his peace and becloud his happiness. It was her nature always to lose resentment in compassion.

She found Christabel in the drawing-room, supported on the one side by her books of devotion and her paraphernalia of smelling-bottles, and flanked on the other side by the *Morning Post*, which she had let fall as Beatrice entered the room, and by the *Queen* which rested against the side of the sofa. It always seemed to Beatrice that Christabel occupied, as it were, a middle position between this world and the next world, and that on the whole she found less weariness in denouncing the one than in contemplating the other.

"Mr. Jevvers," she said, "is in the morning-room. Mr. Letheby and that Mr. Duck who will persist in calling himself Captain and his wife Ma, asked to see him on business. I have been glad of the opportunity for a little repose and quiet thought. Mr. Jevvers is a good man, no doubt, but he is a most exhausting conversationalist. I never knew a man who gave me such an impression of a gimlet, or whatever the tool

is. He is always trying to worm things out of one. Of course in my young days talk of that kind would never have been permitted. Solicitors never sat in the drawing-room. Conversation was always about culture or the best people in society."

"What has Mr. Jevvers been trying to worm out of my Christabel?" asked Beatrice, taking off her gloves.

"My dear, I really think he imagines that you are in love with Mr. Shorder."

Beatrice smiled, and arranged the invalid's pillows. "Yes?" she questioned.

"He seems to be suspicious about Mr. Shorder," continued Christabel. "He has had some long talks with Mr. Colver, and whatever Mr. Colver may have said to him, he is certainly suspicious of Mr. Shorder. I have always said, and you will remember it I am sure, that with all his niceness there is something about Mr. Shorder, quite apart from his drinking habits, which is distasteful to a person of refined feeling. I do not say he is not a gentleman. I do not say that. His mother, Lady Emily, was a daughter of the Earl of Botley, and he has certainly inherited a few of the instincts of a gentleman. I do not say he is not a gentleman. But I do say that he is very far from the Kingdom of Heaven."

Christabel was still talking about Tom Shorder when the door opened and Mr. Jevvers entered the room.

"I am afraid," he said, smiling and rubbing his hands, for Mr. Jevvers was always genial out of office hours, "that Mr. Rodwell has not yet overthrown the hosts of Mammon in Bartown. Every one here, so far as I can see, is chasing the elusive guinea. Ha,

ha!—the elusive guinea! You have heard from Miss Taylor, I expect, that the Church organist and a Captain Duck have been to see me. Will you believe it, these two simple souls are obsessed with the idea of making a fortune out of disused tin mines. They have bought an Option. They have saved up, and bought an Option. They have been asking me to float a company!" He laughed heartily, and clapped his hands together. "Really, it is very amusing to find people even in this remote part of the world immersed in the dreams of speculation."

"And are you going to help them?" asked Beatrice.

"Oh, I will see what I can do for them," replied Mr. Jevvers, with the becoming generosity of a great man. "They appear to be worthy people. There may be something in the idea. I will see."

"You are taking Mr. Colver to London, are you not?" asked Beatrice.

"Yes; there are many matters we have to discuss together," replied Mr. Jevvers. "I am afraid, and you will not think me indiscreet in what I am saying, that the affairs of a certain prominent personage in this neighbourhood are not in the condition of a well-ordered estate. Terrible leakages: frightful waste: and clumsy management. I will say no more. It is not a pleasant subject of conversation. Let us put business on one side."

"But you wanted me to sign something, I thought?" questioned Beatrice.

"To-morrow, to-morrow," replied Jevvers. "After breakfast: a few minutes will suffice; merely a matter of transferring one or two investments. I could wish that the other business was as simple."

On the following morning Beatrice signed the docu-

ments which Mr. Jevvers laid before her, just as he was leaving the house, and after she had seen the gentleman into the carriage on his way to catch the London train, set out to walk across the down.

Shorder came presently, riding his old grey, and expressed his regret that she was on foot. "You must let me come to the Headland," he said, dismounting, and walking at her side. "I'll saddle Marco for you, and we'll give 'em a breather. How's Miss Christabel, and how's Tunbridge Wells?"

"You have had your argument with Mr. Rod-well?" she asked, smiling.

"Argument! My dear lady, the man don't argue. He's worse than I thought he was. I thought he was a fool. He's mad."

"Are you sure you keep an open mind?"

"Open so far as common-sense, fact, and the things of this earth are concerned; yes," laughed Shorder. "But open so far as dreamin', supposin', and diddlin' oneself with imagination is concerned, no! That parson is off his rocker, as we say at the Works. He's balmy. He's cracked. He's a maudlin idiot. hear him talk of love you might think that the East wind was tempered to the shorn lamb and that stoats and cats only did their business against their wills! Lord, the fellow talks as if what man has imagined is a fact of nature. He says we find love on the earth, and so there's love throughout the universe. I don't know what he means by love. But he might as well say because we find bloodshed and cruelty on the earth, so there must be bloodshed and cruelty throughout the universe. There are public-houses in Bartown, and so there'll be gin shops on the moon. There are fleas in London so there'll be fleas in Venus.

There are ballet-girls in Paris, so there'll be ballet-girls in Mars." He burst out laughing. "Did you ever hear such madness?"

"But you made no impression?"

"Ah, you wanted me to do a service. You wanted me to shake his conceit. Well, I haven't succeeded yet, and I doubt if I ever shall. I'll tell you what it is, my friend. There are breeds of men just as there are breeds of dogs. There's the foxhound and there's the sportsman; there's the lap-dog, and there's the parson. Now, I ask you to tell me whether there isn't a regular parsonic phiz? It's as much a phiz to itself as the lawyer's is to itself. You can always tell a lawyer, you can always tell an actor, you can always tell a farmer, you can always tell a soldier or a sailor, and you can always tell a parson. People call the parson's a sweet face! Sweet is another word for weak. I'll give you the law on the subject. The mathematician has a hard and fixed cast of countenance: why?-because his brain is always taut and at full pressure. The parson has a weak and relaxed cast of countenance; why?—because his brain's unstrung and the whole mental machinery has stopped runnin'. You may call the one man's face hard, and the other's sweet, but you know thunderin' well which man you'd sooner trust at a nasty corner. No; I regard all parsons as mad. They refuse to regard the only world we can possibly examine with our senses as a fact; and they prefer to go dreamin' and speculatin' about some other form of existence for the reality of which they cannot trot out a single rag of evidence!"

"Do not forget," said Beatrice quietly, "that the man of science, with all his certain knowledge, cannot help us when we most want comfort."

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- "He won't lie to us, if that's what you mean," answered Shorder.
 - "He cannot say anything," replied Beatrice.

"When do you mean?"

" At death."

"Oh, yes he can say something there."

"What? That it is the end? '

"Yes, that the curtain is down, and the play over. What else is there to say? Do your Church people go dressed in white singing cheerful hymns to the grave? Why, it's religion that invented those confounded handkerchiefs with black borders! The shepherd is voluble at the grave, but the flock bleats! I've no patience with the wicked humbug of it all. We go to war with chaplains packed among the cannon. and praver-books stored with the ammunition. remember learnin' by heart a thing of Nelson's. was a bit of a humbug, but he had his sane moments. Listen to this. 'Damn our enemies!—Bless our friends! Amen. Amen. Amen. I am not such a hypocrite as to bless them that hate us; or, if a man strike me on the cheek, to turn the other. No, knock him down, by God!' That's Nelson! The Nelson touch! Ha. ha! What do you think of that, my friend? 'Knock him down, by God!"

He looked with laughter shining all over his face at the quiet grave eyes of Beatrice. "Don't take offence at the oath," he laughed. "I was only quotin'. Nelson's the sinner, not me!"

"I am not offended," she said. "I am only surprised that you should see anything fine in the quotation. I know quotations that are better than that. Which will live longer in the world, do you suppose, that boast of Nelson, whom any coal-heaver could have

knocked down, or that saying concerning the repentant prodigal, 'But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion'? Which has more helped mankind? Which has saved most lives?"

"For pity's sake don't let us argue!" exclaimed Shorder. "You force me to see that we are both looking all the time at different worlds. It's like two people living on separate stars. Which has saved most lives? Yours of course. But what lives? The lives of the sick, the miserable, the criminal, and the vile. Which will live longer in the world? Yours of course. But what kind of a world is it? A world that refuses to acknowledge the laws goverin' its existence, a pulin' world, a squeamish world, a world where a strong man can scarcely breathe. Look at the world: —look at its humanitarianism fox-huntin' and shootin' are crimes!-look at its vegetarianism—to eat beef is to commit murder! look at its Christian Science—disease is illusion! look at its womanish politics, its dirty literature, its baby music and its childish art! Great Heaven, the world is now like a High School for Girls. natural instinct is either a sin or a crime. With the parson on the one hand and the humanitarian on the other, a natural man is squeezed out of existence. army is regarded with suspicion. A hospital or a lunatic asylum is somethin' tip-top!"

"Perhaps you have never had a great loss," she said quietly.

His face hardened, and he turned and looked at her. "That is cant, my friend," he said, bitterly. "There was death and pain before a word of the Bible was written. There was sufferin' in the days of the

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Stoics. Socrates died as finely as any of your martyrs, and his reason held to the last."

"Don't you think that the suffering of the old world prepared the way for the satisfaction and explanation of religion? Pain and loss have three effects on the human heart, they can soften, harden, or break. Nothing, I think, will ever break your heart, for you are brave. But I wonder whether a great and overwhelming tragedy would soften or harden your heart."

"Don't you think," he laughed, "that it is rather presumptive on your part to imagine that I have not had some hard knocks already. Knocks, perhaps, that would have finished you altogether?"

"Have you?" she asked.

He burst out laughing. "Fishin' again!" he said. "You never can forget to be a woman. Always searchin' for a mystery or a romance."

For a few moments she was silent, and then as they approached the Headland, she said to him. "By the way, your servant Pedro spoke to me yesterday."

Shorder laughed, but it did not ring true. "In . Spanish or in English?" he inquired. "In either case, what about?"

"He wished to speak about you?"

"The fellow worships me!"

"But I stopped him. I had to speak rather sharply to him."

"He didn't like that?"

"No; he was rude."

Shorder laughed again, and stopped his horse. "Rude, was he? That's so like my poor Pedro!" He gathered up the reins in his hand. "I won't

read: "To Miss Haly. I exphaving addressed you yesterday your forgiveness. I am, Señe servant, Pedro Almeida.

CHAPTER XII

FOR THOSE IN PERIL ON THE SEA

WINTER came, and Bartown-in-the-West took its place more and more securely among the respectable towns of England. The popularity of the brilliant clergyman who had kindled into flame with the ancient culture of Oxford the stupor and the dullness of the town waxed stronger with every fresh month of his unresting activity. As if to announce to the whole world its awakening, Mr. Polley, the stationer in the High Street and a representative man, caused to be painted up above his shop window a fresh title, to wit, "The Bartown Library."

There was indeed quite an aesthetic movement in the little town, a sprint towards culture, as it were. The young men were reading Browning and Tolstoy; the young ladies, Ruskin and George Eliot. Book teas became a fashionable diversion; private theatricals of a high order, and concerts of a really classical nature, the chief employment of the winter. To the amusement of Tom Shorder, who was busy hunting bag foxes, a branch of the Fabian Society was started in the town with Rodwell at its head and many of his own workmen as its members. Debates, readings from the plays of Shakespeare, lectures on art and politics, magic lantern entertainments of an instructive

kind—all these followed upon each other's heels throughout the winter, till Bartown seemed to be born again.

There was no parish for many miles around which could boast such brilliant bellringers, so cultivated a choir, or so many flourishing institutions and societies supporting Church work. Week-day services increased in number, guilds of advanced churchmanship attracted both men and women, and the high festivals of the Church were celebrated with a pomp and circumstance which outshone anything in that part of the world.

It seemed, too, as if happiness were coming to many of the inhabitants in material form. Beatrice had rescued Susie Duck from her perilous position by finding for her a pleasant occupation. Susie had learned needlework in a good school, and was now the right hand of Miss Penderwick, who called herself the chief "modiste and court milliner" of the town. Captain Duck and Philip Letheby who had bought for a few pounds the option of a disused tin mine, were confident that with the matter in the capable hands of Mr. Ievvers they would make at least five or six thousand pounds apiece. Captain Duck had quite got into the habit of promising "Ma" a little holiday along with all the olive-branches; and as for Philip Letheby, while he sat playing kyries on his American organ surrounded by the photographs of the faithful fiancée in London, he let himself go, and dreamed of a time when he should call her to his side and live happy ever after.

Dr. Blund still continued to drink, but a bad illness kept even him quiet for three or four weeks, and when he reappeared at the *Angel* it was so plainly as a broken man that nobody thought very much more

about the matter. Mr. Richard Vick, independently of his "poor degraded friend," had conceived the idea of making a fortune out of pitch blend, and Beatrice often met him, as before she had met Captain Duck and Philip Letheby, tramping over the land about disused mines searching for specimens. Thus, the two worst men in the place were partly diverted from their evil ways; and as for the mining students, some of them were now the enthusiastic admirers of Rodwell, while the others were too keen on golf—a game lately introduced by Rodwell—to waste their time or spoil their "eye" by boozing in the Angel. In short, a revolution had taken place in Bartown, and the credit for this worthy change belonged fairly to the brilliant and resistless personality of the Art Parson.

It is now our business to relate a romantic event which created a remarkable stir in the life of Bartown. Mrs. Borrowsbie, whom the reader may remember as seated in a little spring-cart and coming over the hills in conversation with her donkey Joseph, numbered among the customers she called upon an old gentleman by the name of Biddicombe, who had once kept a turnpike, and now lived in frugal retirement looking after a few chickens and an orchard midway between Bartown and the four cross-roads opposite The Hangers.

It was for this old gentleman alone that Mrs. Borrowsbie dismounted from the cart, a most significant matter seeing that she weighed sixteen stone and dratted the step of her cart every time she had occasion to use it. All her other customers were expected to bring their goods to the side of the cart, and from the eminence of the seat Mrs. Borrowsbie would look down with pursed lips at the plucked chickens and

ducks, feel and pinch the breasts which had been carefully floured, and then state her price to the good wife with a critical remark concerning the breastbones of the proffered merchandise. If the price were accepted the old lady would slowly fumble in the pocket of her apron for half-crowns and coppers, and the vendor would carefully pack away the goods in any hamper at the back of the cart to which Mrs. Borrowsbie, generally with a coin between her teeth, was pleased to direct her. Such was the deference paid to the higgler, who was reputed to be immensely rich. by all the good wives of the neighbourhood. But in the case of Mr. Biddicombe the deference—nay, may we not say the affection?—was entirely on the side of Mrs. Borrowsbie. "If I have one weakness," she would say to Joseph, "it's for little old Jeremy Biddicombe. Ah, my dear, there's something unnatural sweet in that little old filbert of a man. I do believe. Joseph, he's more to me nor what you are. He's so . . . well, there, I do declare he's so toothsome as never was."

Well, one day, one cold and bitter winter's afternoon, as it happened, Mrs. Borrowsbie arriving at the cottage of old Mr. Biddicombe was left to dismount without a welcome word or a helping hand from the little old filbert of a man. "Stand you still now, Joseph," she cried, depressing the side of the cart with one ample foot, and after many muttered imprecations and false attempts, arriving on the ground with a sudden tilt, which threatened to turn both Joseph and the cart completely over. "Why, look at all they fowls springing at the wire-netting, then!" she exclaimed as she approached the cottage gate; "it do seem, my dear, as if they'm starving for food.

Look at that, then, if Mr. Biddicombe hasn't clean forgotted to feed them!"

She lifted the latch of the cottage and looked in, "Why, Mr. Biddicombe, my dear!" she exclaimed, stepping quickly in, "what for ever is the matter with 'ee? Choking again are 'ee? Do'ee now tell me, there's a dear? You're that white and caught and all of a shiver-shake, it seems you be near your death."

"So a am, Mrs. Borrowsbie, so a am," quavered old Mr. Biddicombe. "I be dying man, sure enough. Can't get me breath. Can't move me legs. God be calling me for certain sure; but, look, how unreasonable 'tis, a aven't fed my poultry since last night!"

Mrs. Borrowsbie looked at the dear little old gnarled and twisted man, with his fine head of white hair, his little twitching black eyebrows, his pretty hazel eyes and his cupid's bow of a mouth, and felt that he was even more toothsome and filberty than she had imagined.

"You're tiresome to be sure, talkin' like that," she said. "God calling you! a fiddle-faddle idea to be sure! No, my dear, nothing of the sort, for I know how He calls people, and when He do call, nobody can't keep Him waiting; ah, that's the trewth."

Talking all the time, the good woman laid and lighted a fire, filled the kettle with water and set it to boil, got out the tea-things, and then telling old Biddicombe to be sure and not move an inch, she went outside, fed the poultry, collected the eggs, gave his nosebag to Joseph, and presently returning talking just as hard as ever.

A couple of eggs were set to boil, and then Mrs. Borrowsbie started rubbing old Mr. Biddicombe's hands, and brushing him down over the shoulders as

if he had been a horse. "It's a shame for you to be living all alone like," she said. "It isn't right that you should. A dear old man like you, too! I'm minded to come and look after you myself. I am; 'tis trewth I'm telling you, mind. Poor old gentleman, with no one to get you a cup of tea nor nothing; why, it's shameful."

"That's what a want," piped Mr. Biddicombe. "A want a wife, bad a do."

"And you can't do better than take me, my dear," said Mrs. Borrowsbie, bustling about in front of the fire. "I'm not one of the niggle-naggling sort, nor I'm not one of the extravagant sort neither. woman like me's worth pounds an' pounds to a man. This kettle won't never come to the boil. I do believe. Pounds an' pounds I'm worth to a man mind. And you all so lonely by yourself, my dear, and liable to choke yourself with a crumb; it do seem unsociable, don't it now, Jeremy? What a cupboard you've got here, too! Not a bit o' jam nor nothing, and the butter next to the onions, and the sugar covered with dust as thick as Joseph's coat; well, I never did see such a dirty smelling hole of a place in all my born days, I didn't. And you thinking that God was calling you with such a messy place as this left behind! Why, He'd be ashamed to have 'ee, my dear. And the knives so dirty an' all; not one fit to cut you a piece of nice bread and butter with your eggs, I do declare. And the forks! Oh, my dear, however come you to let your forks get so black and sticky? I'd rather make you a piece o' hot buttered toast with a garden prong than one o' these messy forks o' yours. Never mind, my dear, we'll do what we can, won't us? and when we're married you shall have splits wi' your tea

and a piece of plum cake, too, my dear, or my name wasn't Elizabeth Pendick before I married old Samuel Borrowsbie, who lies in Trelant churchyard, and as handsome a funeral he had, my dear, as if he had been born and bred to it. There, it's boiling now, the dratted thing. I'll give you a nice hot cup o' tea, and then I'll put you to bed, and come round in the morning to see if you've fed the chickens. Little dear of a man!"

Mr. Biddicombe became so larky at the prospect of his marriage that he ate a hearty tea, never choked once, cackled cheerfully over the joke of a marriage at his time of life, and said he must be stepping down to the town in the morning to buy himself a suit of wedding clothes and a ring for Mrs. Borrowsbie. recovered so quickly that he was able to go with Mrs. Borrowsbie to help her climb into the spring-cart, and some one who saw the proceeding from behind a hedge declared that before he attempted this labour of Hercules, or shall we say this toil of Sisyphus-for Mrs. Borrowsbie often rolled down again and required pushing forward and upward many and many a time-yes. this some one declared that Mrs. Borrowsbie lifted the little old man clean off his feet and imprinted two most hearty kisses on his cheeks.

The news spread like wild fire on the following day that old Mr. Biddicombe was going to marry old Mrs. Borrowsbie. At first it was treated as a foolish tale, then it was treated as a good joke, and last of all it was treated, at any rate by a certain proportion of the population, as a most beautiful and hopeful reality.

No sooner was the news confirmed than Miss Penderwick was besieged by customers clamouring for new dresses. She and Susie were kept busy from morn-

ing to night. It was as if hope had blown a blast through the pipe of Spring into the ear of every spinster and widow in the town. Not a manless woman there but did not dream again the dream of youth. ladies of sixty tittivated themselves as they had not done these forty years. Bonnets of the most dazzling brightness and hats of the most surprising rakishness made their appearance in the street. The Misses Stringer even were caught by the epidemic, and tempered the funereal blackness of their garments with little fearful bows of hope and little dreadful knots of hymeneal daring. More, will it be believed that Miss Christabel Taylor grew suddenly well of her complaints. and walked up the aisle of the church and took her place in Beatrice's pew dressed with all the magnificence of a lady in the very first flight of society, and made the most coquettish advances towards whichever of the two Farnabys came the handier.

The withered old gentlemen of the place found themselves treated with a fresh civility, and crawled about no longer like toothless and masterless dogs. They came out like sunlight after a prolonged period of gloom. They sported waistcoats that had lain dormant for thirty years and more. They cocked their hats. They assumed an air. They met at street corners, and actually laughed together.

As luck would have it for Rodwell, one of the very first of the old ladies to hook a husband in this sudden epidemic of love was that rod to his back and that bane of his existence, the widow Banthorpe. She caught a soft old thing named Chumble, who was something to do with tarpaulins and fish nets, and who lived in a shop by the harbour and sat under the Reverend Mr. Simon Eyre. Where or how she picked

him up nobody ever knew, but it was believed that as soon as she had got the old fellow definitely committed she surveyed him with a finger at her lip in the deepest meditation and moved away saying, "Well, I don't think there is anything else."

Unfortunately for Rodwell, Pilkin was already married, and there was no hope of deliverance from that evil. But to get rid of Mrs. Banthorpe was a joy sufficient for a year, and never in his life did he give a wedding present or read the marriage service (for Mrs. Banthorpe proved her mastership from the first by insisting on a church wedding) with greater pleasure than when he "turned off" the smirking and incompetent Mrs. Banthorpe.

Rodwell was one evening laughing to Beatrice about this Spring madness in all the dear old things of Bartown. They were walking from the town to the harbour, where Rodwell was to conduct a service he had only lately instituted of blessing the fishing fleet before it put out to sea.

The shop of old Mr. Chumble set him talking about the epidemic, and he made merry over it in his rather mordant fashion. Beatrice interrupted him.

"I can see the fun of it," she said; " but there is something else besides."

"Oh, in my serious moments I dislike it intensely," he replied.

"I don't think I do," she answered, "I didn't mean that. No, I think it is rather a nice thing. It means human comfort and human friendship; it is homage to the great idea of the human home."

"There is that side to it," he said, smiling; "but it is rather comic I think."

"I don't know that it is," she answered doubtfully.

She knitted her brows and looked away to the sea. "I am not sure that even Falstaff is really comic; Don Quixote certainly is not. After all, is anything comedy if we look deep enough?"

. "No, not if we look deep enough," he answered, as if it would be foolish to look deeply into a teacup for instance.

"Humour has changed wonderfully with the ages," she said. "One generation is bored by almost everything which made the generation before it laugh. I wonder if laughter will die out altogether."

"That would not be wise, would it?" he questioned, rather amused at the idea.

"Laughter, not smiles," she answered.

"What do you find fault with in laughter?"

"The Arab says that laughter is for white men and monkeys."

"But the white men are very much top-dog!"

"Yes, they are top-dog," she answered. "That, of course, is something, a great deal. Success is a fine thing."

"But not everything. I did not mean that."

"Oh, no; not everything," she said. "Success leads to vainglory, and vainglory always has a blinding effect."

It came to him as they made the bend of the harbour, and the noise of the sea grew louder in their ears, that he had only lately renewed his vow of celibacy without a pang of regret and without saying a word to Beatrice. He recalled that scene on the cliff when she had offered him her love, and he had asked her to make of it a sacrifice to God. She had seemed to him, then, weaker and a little smaller than himself, less able to grasp the amazing and the overwhelming



disproportion between time and eternity. Now, in some measure, she seemed to stand a little above him, to see deeper into life, to be more acquainted with the human heart, and to possess a wider view of existence. He was seized with a desire to speak to her once more intimately, heart to heart; to find out, if he could, whether she had altered her view of human love or changed at all her disposition towards him.

"We are too early for the service," he said: "shall we go and sit up there on that bench for a few minutes?" The bench to which he pointed was planted beside a path leading through the towans to the harbour. They retraced their steps to the end of the harbour, climbed the hill and reached the bench. Sitting there, they had the sea upon their right side, afar off, on the left, the town; and immediately in front, and under them the harbour, with the lantern blinking at the end of it and the fishing boats with their red and green lights casting reflections in the moving water. As they talked there came to them the sound of creaking boom and straining cord, mingling with the rough voices of busy fishermen, the sough of the wind and the deep full tone of the sea.

"Beatrice," he said, after they had sat silent for a little time; "I renewed my vow a few weeks ago, the vow we spoke about in the summer. You understand, Beatrice? You think that I was right?"

"Oh," she answered, smiling, "you were right, of course. Your reason guides you. You could not be false to that."

"But, I want you to know," he said, turning to look at her face, beautiful to his eyes in the moonlight and the mystery of evening, "that my heart remains human."

She smiled again, and a light came into her eyes as she turned to meet his gaze.

"I don't think it has begun to be human," she answered slowly.

"Why do you say that?"

Her voice was very soft and musical, and it stirred him deeply. "You do not give yourself time to be human," she said quietly.

- "I fling myself into work because it helps me to get the victory."
- "Work is good," she said slowly. "Work is very good. But meditation! that is better."
- "I dare not meditate," he said, feeling the charm of the woman's tranquil soul coming about him like a scent.
- "Dare not!" she said very softly, and her eyebrows lifted a little as she smiled.
- "You will not understand me," he answered, looking away.
- "I should like you to be master of yourself," she answered. "Be celibate if your whole being cries out for the sacrifice, if your mind and your heart consent to it; but if not——"
 - "Break my vow?"
 - "Like a piece of thread; yes!"
- "You are very beautiful, Beatrice," he said, looking at her with eyes which every moment saw in her a new loveliness. "Your soul shines through your face, and I know it is a lovely soul. And yet, and yet. Why is it, how is it, that we, who share the same religion, see the Object of that religion with quite different eyes? We are really walking to eternity on different roads. Your God, Beatrice, is not my God. Once you said to me that the song of Ruth was in your heart."



"Yes," she interrupted, and lifted her face to the stars. "Entreat me not to leave thee!—that was the cry in my heart then. I can say it now. And if you did entreat, I should refuse to return from following after you. I will tell you why. Because there is in my heart for you a mother which nothing can deny or forbid. I want to watch over you; I want to be near you when the hour comes for you to discover your human loneliness, and—yes," she nodded her head in emphasis and looked at him with almost daring in her eyes, "and yes, your loneliness from God."

"Beatrice!" he cried, "what is it you mean?"
"Do you feel," she said, turning quite round to him, and speaking softly through lips that scarcely seemed to move, "that you are close, very close, to the heart of God? Are you sensible of the everlasting and the infinite? Do you feel deeply and securely at one with the whole universe, and with all the purpose, the patience, the long tolerance, and the love of its Creator? Are you at peace? Is your mind quiet and your soul serene? Are you tranquil, Richard, or are you yet troubled about many things?"

"What do you mean by loneliness from God?" he asked, sadness and reproof and surprise in his voice. "I was going to remind you of Ruth's song. I was going to ask you when you will say to me, 'Thy God shall be my God'?"

"When?" she said, lifting her face again to the stars and smiling into the great sparkling vault of heaven; "when you have a God to give me! Oh, let me tell you. To-day, Richard, you are worshipping a tradition: to-morrow you may be worshipping a God. I wait for that. What was your old difficulty? Why did you break away at the beginning

from your vows of ordination? Was it because you had lost faith in God? No; it was because you were troubled by certain articles of belief about Him. You have got the victory there. You believe in the Church; you would give your life for the Church; you are a great and faithful servant of the Church. But the real battle for you is yet to be fought. I want to be by you then. Richard, I will be by you then. I know it will come, that great and difficult hour; and then, when it is fought quite out, all will be well with us."

She spoke with the soft assured note of a deep spiritual serenity, and her words were like a spell to him; so that he could have stayed there listening to her through the night, though she spoke against him and words difficult to bear. But as she finished speaking, she rose and the action recalled him to himself. He sighed deeply, and shivered as if the cold had pierced him.

"Yes, we must be going," he said. And then, as they went down the path to the harbour, he said: "I wish you could feel, as I feel, Beatrice, that outside the Church there is no security, because the Church is God."

"The whole earth is God's and the glory thereof," she answered with a smile. "But no more now, Richard. You will call down His blessing on the fishermen, and those that are worthy will receive it into their souls."

"Yes," he said, with a smile, "that is one of our articles. The unworthiness of the priest does not count!"

As they reached the harbour, where the orchestra was already gathered and a large crowd assembling,



they came upon the old Wesleyan minister, Simon Eyre, with his wife at his side leaning on his arm.

"We are coming to your service," said the old

minister, after they had greeted.

"That is kind of you," said Rodwell, and making his excuses he hurried on to the lifeboat house where the choir was then robing by lantern light.

"It is a beautiful idea, this service," said the grey, bent old man to Beatrice. "Ay, it's public confession of God that's wanted. Mr. Rodwell is doing a great and noble work in the town."

"I hope the people are beginning to find their way to the secret of life," said Beatrice quietly; and Mrs. Eyre, whose face shone with the purest beauty of soul, looked at her closely.

"It is a beginning," she said, smiling gently at Beatrice. "To be good is to make a beginning."

Her husband hurried them forward, anxious that his wife should not try with the full wonder of her sublime spirituality the faith of the younger woman.

Beatrice watched the fishermen busy in their boats, and wished that Rodwell had seen how proper a thing it would have been to ask Mr. Eyre to take part in the service. Her thoughts did not leave this track even when the orchestra, protected from the wind by the shelter of the lifeboat house and with lanterns burning on their stands, began to play the hymn, "Eternal Father, strong to save."

The crowd uncovered; the choir emerged from the lifeboat house singing, a chorister going on ahead with the crucifix, and Rodwell, wearing his biretta and surplice, coming last. The white-robed procession drew up on the edge of the quay. The hymn was sung by the choir, the crowd, and the fishermen in their

boats; the sea sounded a deep and continuous obbligato to the voices.

O hear us, when we cry to Thee For those in peril on the sea.

The service was very simple. Rodwell read a collect and two prayers; then came another hymn; then Rodwell read the Lesson of Christ walking on the sea; and after that followed silent prayer and the Blessing. As the fishermen made their last preparations for the long cruise, the choir sang "Abide with me."

The scene was altogether beautiful in Beatrice's eyes. The lantern-light shone upon the surplices of the choir, and upon the faces of the shadowy men and women. She saw against the darkness of the night the clean outline of Rodwell's face half-lifted from his book. He was singing earnestly the first verse of the hymn:

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide; The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide; When other helpers fail, and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

The booming of the sea sounded through the harmony of the lifted voices. The little crowd of men and women standing on the windy pier were like people on the verge of the sands of life gazing into the vast ocean of eternity. The sky was full of rolling clouds which swept across the face of the moon, so that the scene was now darkened and now brightened. Only the little flickering lamps on the harbour were constant.

The fishermen down below in the harbour were hoisting their sails. The creaking of the pulleys, the straining of the ropes, sounded through the hymn. The green and the red lanterns on their vessels cast waver-



ing lines of coloured light upon the quiet pool; Beatrice watched the boats lift and fall, saw the quivering lines of light in the water, and listened to the muffled voices of the men as they went to and fro at their work. Everybody's gaze was bent upon the lifting and falling boats down below in the harbour, and on the dark and shadowy figures of the men going up and down the decks.

The last verse of the hymn was reached:

Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes . . .

Beatrice lifted her eyes from the fleet and looked at Rodwell. He had turned his gaze to the shining crucifix held by the chorister, and was singing as if he saw there, blessing the service, the Man of Sorrows.

There was a moment's pause at the conclusion of the hymn, and then the most beautiful design of the service was reached.

As the boats glided slowly from the pier with the water lapping at their prows, the choir, without musical accompaniment, sang softly and slowly:

Saviour, again to Thy dear Name we raise With one accord our parting hymn of praise, We stand to bless Thee ere our worship cease; Then, lowly kneeling, wait Thy word of peace.

A pause followed. Then suddenly the rougher voices of the fishermen were heard singing alone from the moving boats, not so softly but none the less reverently:

Grant us Thy peace upon our homeward way; With Thee begun, with Thee shall end the day; Guard Thou the lips from sin, the hearts from shame, That in this house have called upon Thy Name.

It seemed that the word 'house' sung from the sea by those deep voices suddenly brought to men's minds the realization that the whole earth is the place and dwelling of the Most High, the temple and the altar of His worship. A great hush fell upon the people. The choir took up the third verse, very softly and very slowly, as the last of the ships passed out of the harbour.

Grant us Thy peace, Lord, through the coming night, Turn Thou for us its darkness into light; From harm and danger keep Thy children free, For dark and light are both alike to Thee.

The voices died away upon the night air, and for a moment only the murmur of the full ocean sounded in the ears of the people. Then, growing fainter and fainter as the ships with their lanterns dotting the ocean crossed the bar and stood out to sea, came the voices of the fishermen back to the land:

Grant us Thy peace throughout our earthly life, Our balm in sorrow, and our stay in strife; Then when Thy voice shall bid our conflict cease, Call us, O Lord, to Thine eternal peace.

As the voices sank away into the night, and the sea sounded louder and the sky appeared to grow darker, the choir sang the sevenfold Amen. Then there was silence. The voices of men and the words of prayer and hymn had been caught up into the infinite and silent vast of God's eternal quiet.

"Let us pray," said Rodwell.

The people on the harbour bowed their heads in silent prayer, many of the wives and daughters of fishermen in tears, and for a few minutes the only

sound on the quay was the noise of the deep ocean and the dying away of the wind.

When they raised their heads, the sea shone for a moment like a shield of burnished steel, the dome of the night glittered with innumerable stars, and, scattered far across the sea, burned the red and green lights of the fleet, fading dimmer and dimmer away into the distance.

The wind rose again, rose out of the sea like a sigh from the breast of nature, and the silence was broken by movement and the sound of voices.

CHAPTER XIII

WHICH TELLS HOW TOM SHORDER PROVIDED BARTOWN WITH A SPECTACLE.

NE bright afternoon in the Spring, as Rodwell came out of the building which Beatrice had set up after all, for the increasing needs of his social work, he encountered Shorder.

"Well, parson," challenged the squire, who was enjoying the sunshine, "you're still at it, eh? Saving souls by the ton. Setting the Styx on fire. Carrying the whole of Bartown in your waistcoat pocket, to kick up their heels and have a high old time of it in Beulah Land, sweet Beulah Land."

"Something like that," rejoined Rodwell, smiling.

"You're a wonder," laughed Shorder, striking a match for his cigar. "Think what it would be if you caught the influenza, or got the gout and couldn't preach for a month of Sundays. Why, the devil would hop in as quick as a gadfly, and the last state of Bartown—well, Tyre would be a fool to it."

"Look here, I'll argue with you," said Rodwell, watching Shorder as he lighted his cigar, "Come up to the vicarage and drink a cup of parson's tea with me. You've never entered my door since I came here, ver a year ago now. Come up, and fight it out with fix",

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Shorder laughed good-humouredly. "Tea! and by the same token, parson's tea! What's that like, I wonder. No; I'll stick to my own cup: I take what the grape gives, cold with a dance in it. No hot thick stuff ever goes down my throttle. But I'll walk along with you, parson. I'll go with you a little way, for I'm gettin' fond of you, and almost thou persuadest me to be a humbug." He broke off of a sudden, and pointed forward. "Now, here's a sight for Bartown; Old Captain Stringer is comin' along! We'll put you between us, and walk through the town together, the man of God, the atheist, and the devil. 'Pon my soul, it's a rich thing. Let the sun shine upon it, and the old people run to their windows!"

Captain Stringer, leaning heavily on a thick stick, for all he walked as stiff as a ramrod, and nursing the shops as though to keep as far as possible out of the sunlight, came steadily, slowly, and, not to put too fine a point upon it, majestically towards them. He stopped when they greeted him, and after a little persuasion on the part of Shorder—who begged the old man to help him out of a stiff argument with the parson—consented to go with them to the end of the High Street. So Bartown saw the spectacle of its handsome and popular young vicar going slowly up the street with the notorious Shorder on one side of him, and the formidable Captain Stringer on the other.

"What is the argument, Mr. Shorder?" demanded Stringer, placing his left hand behind his back. "Please to state it, and let me know the terms. Sir, there's no arguing without terms."

"The terms," answered Shorder, "are God, Man, and Death."

"The first of them," said Stringer, "that is to say,

for all men who use their reasons, is without meaning. The second of them is a more or less superior animal produced by the struggle for existence. And the third of them is a natural process of decay to which flesh, grass, wood, stone, rock, everything, is subjected by the law obtaining."

"Now you know the terms," laughed Shorder. "The problem is, how to construct out of these three terms, a future life, a crown of glory, and an excuse for parsons."

"It can't be done, sir; it can't be done," said Stringer, striking the pavement with his stick for the necessary emphasis.

"You hear that, parson?" asked Shorder. But before Rodwell could reply, the giant of a sudden stopped their progress by getting clean in front of Stringer and Rodwell. He caught hold of each one by the coat collar, and addressing himself chiefly to Stringer, began, laughing all over his face, to deliver himself of the following exordium.

"Listen to me; you're both crazy, both of you. I'll go no further with two such crazy fellows. Why, bless my stars, see what it is you're at. Stringer, you bumble-headed old mole you!—you're as bad as the parson here. You're both crazy, and crazy about the same thing, look you. The one says there is, and the other says there isn't; is: isn't; is: isn't;—that's how you both go on the livelong day, while the sun's shinin' and the birds are singin'. All day long, Stringer, you muddle and stir the last stews of your silly old brains by trying to prove that something don't exist. Why, you monster of a man, you fool of a philosopher, you ought to be out pitching stones into the sea, or paddling in the waves, or diggin' sand-

castles, or playing leap-frog with old Duck, or getting a wife for yourself, if there's a spinster still left in this crazy town. You ought to be enjoyin' yourself, Stringer, old boy. Stringer, old cocky, you ought to be divertin' yourself. Time's short, old coger; time's devilish short. Gather the rosebuds while you may, Stringer, my buck. You don't believe in Eternity; then why in the name of thunder do you spend all your life talking about it? Out upon you, for a long glass of sour milk. What is it you say?—There's nothing but this life; the grave puts a full stop to all our cackling; is it so?—then dance a hornpipe in the middle of the road, Stringer; laugh, Stringer; sing Stringer; make a darned fool of yourself and show the town you're a devil of a fellow still."

They were standing opposite a grocer's shop, and a boy carrying provisions to the cart at the kerb, delayed to listen to them. Shorder caught him by the ear, and swung him towards the shop. "Get on with your work, you lazy young monkey!" he said, laughing. "Lose time now, and you'll be beatin' your master's cob to overtake it."

"Sir," replied Stringer, as Shorder came back to them, "a man who makes use of his rational instincts does not expect to find pleasure in the world, nor does he wish to find pleasure therein. Max Nordau has——"

"Max Nordau be hanged!" laughed Shorder. "What is Max Nordau more than Tom Shorder? Has he a third eye, a second mouth, three ears, and a bigger back? I could drink him under the table; I could beat him fifty lengths in three furlongs; I could knock his darned head off his shoulders. To bed with your Max Nordau. Shove him under the blankets and

beat his brains out with a warming-pan. Sit on him, Stringer; sit on him."

"Sir, perhaps you will allow weight to the names of Hackel and Heagle——"

Shorder flourished his arms about the head of Stringer till the old man quailed.

"To the devil with both of 'em!" he cried. "Allow weight to 'em? Yes, by gum, three stone and ride the breath out of 'em. What the deuce do you want to go muddlin' your brain for, with the buzzings of a lot of dead old busters who never knew what life was? What is life, Stringer, my gamecock; what is it, old cockalorum?"

"On the broad principle that everything is wrong——"

"Hark at him!" cried Shorder. "Hark at the the old cuckoo-clock! Man alive, nothing is wrong. Nothing is wrong at all. Life is a dish which you can eat at from two sides of a table, the sane side and the crazy side. Parsons, atheists and philosophers sit on the crazy side, and find every morsel of the dish sour on their stomachs; on the sane side are men whose hearts sit quiet at an ox rail or a stone wall, who ride hell for leather all the way, and take the rough with the smooth and eat hearty, and drink deep, and find that all's sweet that's healthy, and don't whine and don't argue and don't care a toss of a farthing for foul weather or a crack on the head. Stringer, you wicked old man you, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! You're an excuse for parsons. You justify the Church. So long as there are atheists to argue with. there'll be parsons preachin' and prayin'. When all the world gets out to sea, or rides horseback, or goes up in a balloon, or takes to toot-tooting over the mountains in motor-cars, and don't care a snip for arguin' and controvertin', why, then there'll be no parsons left, and peace will reign on the earth!"

"You are so eloquent," said Rodwell, "that the other side gets no chance to put in its claim for a hearing."

"You!" laughed Shorder: "You! why, you have the whole Sunday to yourself, and most of the week-days too, as far as I can hear. We've never had such a talkative parson in Bartown before. People say they can hardly ask for an egg at breakfast without hearin' your voice from the church pipin' away, in that rum key common to parsons, about the Scripture movin' us in sundry places to neglect our duties and spend the blessed day and waste the blessed sunlight in callin' ourselves miserable sinners!"

"Now, I'll put a point to you," said Rodwell, smiling.

"I'll blunt it for you quick enough," rejoined Shorder, laughing.

"It is just this: the line of country you recommend to mankind was ridden by one Solomon at a pace which even you will never excel; he went the whole course, and the end didn't please him. He described it, if you remember, as vanity. The line of country I recommend is the road along which millions of people have gone and, bearing heavy burdens some of them, have found the journey a pleasant one, and the end happiness. We are both historians. We both argue from experience. Which has wisdom on his side, you or me?"

"Stringer, what's the answer?" demanded Shorder.

"The answer to that," said Stringer slowly, " is the answer which Hackel makes."

"It's this," said Shorder. "Solomon wrote books

—a bad sign—and did himself too well—a stupid folly. He didn't keep himself tight and corky. He didn't ride enough, didn't run enough. As for the other road, —it has by-paths leadin' to mad-houses, Salvation Armies and Revivals; and after all it ends, where Solomon's pleasanter road ends, in a ditch which there's no gettin' out of. No, parson; take my word for it, a man who keeps himself well, who has a good liver in him, and a bold heart, and a clean brain, and who goes out into the air and drinks it right in; so!—such a man, take my word for it, never cries vanity, and never has enough of it."

"True; he never has enough of it," answered Rodwell. "And so he wants to go on afterwards."

"No; you're wrong," said Shorder, for a moment serious. "On my word, the appetite for more life, after the eyes close for the last time, is dyin' out. I believe the parsons invented it. People don't want it. They're fed up with it when the senses go. Sleep comes as a relief then. They're tired, and they want to be let alone. Dash it, you won't let 'em alone. You bury the dried and empty shuck as if it were young seed."

Rodwell smiled. "You make your own man, and make him want what you want and do what you do."

"There, Stringer! That's the parson all over! He'd set a churchwarden against the natural man, and lay his last dollar on the church-man. He'd have us believe that all mankind is clamourin' for eternal life. Not it! The world's against you, parson. It has been, and it always will be. Religious people?—a teaspoon out of the ocean. Men are not religious. They are no more born with religion than they are born with black coats. Let a child run loose and see how much religion it will pick up. But, confound you for a par-

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son, if you aren't makin' me argue when I might be watchin' my hounds at their oatmeal and horseflesh! Stringer, Dr. Stringer, LL.D. and F.R.S., most erudite of men and profound of scholars, since you won't cut a caper and gather the rosebuds, I'll leave you to finish off the parson. Chuck away your Haeckel and Hegel and go for him with your own fists, man. Pound him, Stringer. Don't leave an ounce of wind in him. Good-bye, parson: if the old coger don't do you up, come and drink a glass with me some day soon. It's better stuff than tea."

He was moving away when suddenly round the corner at which they were talking came Mrs. Blund, running hurriedly and breathlessly.

"Mr. Rodwell," she panted, "please to come at once. Dr. Blund. He's asking for you. I've been to the vicarage: I've been everywhere; hunting for you. Don't delay a moment, please."

"I'll come at once," answered Rodwell. "Dr. Blund is ill?"

"He's dying," she said. "I ought never to have left him. I'll go on ahead. Please be quick."

Tom Shorder stopped her. "A minute, Mrs. Blund, please," said he. "I'll get you back quicker than your legs brought you." He took a step to the door of the grocer's shop near which they were standing, and "I'll borrow your cart for two minutes, Curwen," he said, and without waiting for an answer, and telling the parson to be quick and get up, he lifted Mrs. Blund into the grocer's cart, leaped up himself with the reins in his hand, and before Rodwell was quite seated sent the little horse off at a smart trot to the smiling delight of the High Street.

Rodwell wondered if the illness of Dr. Blund was as

serious as the wife made it out to be. She was in shabby clothes, as usual, but her jacket was brushed, her worn kid gloves were buttoned, and she had fastened a neat scarf round her neck. It seemed as if she had made the most of her wardrobe before setting out on this errand of life and death.

"What is the matter with Dr. Blund?" asked Rodwell quietly and sympathetically, as the cart, half packed with provisions, rattled along the High Street.

"Collapse," she said. "He has gone in a moment. He's a complete wreck of his former self. All in a moment."

"Have you sent for Dr. Simpson?"

"Dr. Blund will not have him inside the door."

"And you feel that the illness is really critical?"

"It isn't illness," she answered. "It's collapse. Dr. Blund is dying."

The words struck Rodwell with disgust. He shrank from them. The old drunkard was dying. The dreadful body, with its swollen flesh and its oozing skin, was hardening and greying now, was lying there in the empty house burnt out like a clinker. And he must go to the bedside, and sit with that degraded wreck of mortality, and watch the murdered soul go shuddering from the filthy and abominable clay into the pure presence of Almighty God. He sickened at the task before him. It disgusted him like something coarse and vile.

As for Tom Shorder, with his eyes on the horse's ears, he was feeling in his heart first a fear that Mrs. Blund might talk to him about her husband, and even more than this, a deep compassion for animals. Here was this little tradesman's horse, which once possessed a mouth and once might have been taught to go into its bridle and trot freely without fear of the weight

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behind, living a life of terror, frightened of every stride, expectant every moment of thwack and jag, the slave of some lad with a flogging whip and a jerking hand who knew nothing of horses.

"Parson," he said suddenly, leaning across Mrs. Blund for a moment: "you pray in the Litany that it may please God to bless all men, and to preserve the kindly fruits of the earth so that in due time we may enjoy them; in fact you pretty nearly pray for everythin'—kings, queens, bishops, magistrates, mankind in general, and all the produce of the earth suitable for man's consumption. But there's one thing you don't pray for; you don't say a word for animals. Why not the clause, 'That it may please Thee to save and protect from the ignorance and cruelty of wicked men, all horses, dogs, cattle and other beasts of the earth in a state of flesh and blood, framed like man to feel and to suffer?' Why not?"

Rodwell was not in the mood either for argument or banter. He could not even see the beauty of Shorder's extempore petition. "Would you include foxes?" he asked, a little coldly.

"A horse must be driven and a fox must be hunted; but there's two ways of doin' both," answered Shorder, and relapsed into silence.

In a few minutes the journey was done, and Mrs. Blund got down from the cart, pushed open the gate by the side of which was the brass plate she had so often polished, and, feeling in the pocket of her jacket for the latch-key, hurried impatiently to the front door.

"Thank you for your kindness to the poor woman," said Rodwell, in a low voice as he got down from the cart.

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"I don't envy you your job," replied Shorder, getting down too.

"Are you coming in?" asked Rodwell, with some

surprise.

"Not I! I want to look at this poor little brute's collar and bit. D—— the swine who drive horses without understandin' a thing about 'em!"

Rodwell was called by Mrs. Blund from the doorstep, and he made haste to follow her.

As for Shorder, after carefully examining the harness of the grocer's horse, he took the little creature back to a saddler's shop, got a new collar fitted, altered the brichin, bought it a new bit, and then, proceeding to the grocer's, had both the master and the lad into the street and taught them more in five minutes about horses and driving than ever they had learned in the whole course of their lives. "And hearken, my lad," he concluded: "if ever I see you floggin' this good little cob, I'll fetch you out of it and I'll rub you into a thorn hedge till you're as prickly as a hedgehog. Take and mind now. If you can't drive like a coachman you shan't drive at all."



CHAPTER XIV

THE STORES OF MERCY

DR. BLUND'S eyes were fixed upon the opening door as Rodwell followed Mrs. Blund into the room. He lay upon his side with the bedclothes huddled about his shoulders. As the clergyman approached, he picked up a part of the sheet with a trembling hand and rubbed it slowly over his forehead, like a man drying his face with a towel.

Mrs. Blund brought a chair to the bedside, and motioned Rodwell to be seated. "Mr. Rodwell will sit with you, dear," she said caressingly, bending over the bed. He looked up at her and showed by his eyes that he understood. There was in his face a look of dull and steadfast fear.

At the bedside was a table. An open Bible lay there, and near it was a prayer-book, a tumbler half filled with barley-water, and a little vase of primroses. The room contained almost all the furniture in the house. Rodwell had been horrified on his way upstairs by the destitution of the place. "You must excuse the untidiness," Mrs. Blund had said; "I've been obliged to send most of the furniture away for repair."

It was a relief to him to find a carpet on the bedroom floor, a few pictures on the wall, and sufficient furniture to give the square room, with its two broad windows overlooking a square of green garden, the appearance and sense of habitation. The ticking of a small travelling clock on the mantelpiece sounded companionable in his ears. He was grateful for the little vase of primroses which Mrs. Blund had set on the table by the bedside.

Rodwell said something kindly to the doctor, and leaned forward in his chair with affected sympathy in his eyes. The doctor made no reply and did not alter the expression of his countenance. He looked like a man afraid of something, but angry with and rebellious against the cause of his fear. His lips, which seemed to have fallen inwards, were working ceaselessly, munching and champing in a slow monotony; the stubborn moustache and beard of iron-grev moved with the restlessness of the mouth. The familiar glazed purple of his hairy cheeks and short characterless nose was now a dead violet; the small eyes, filled with a dull ferocity like a baffled animal's, were more deeply sunken in their sockets; on his high and broad forehead, deadly white against the violet of his face and the iron-grey of his hair, there was a thick moisture, innumerable little globules of water, white and dead looking, without the life and the sparkle of dew. It was the beaten fear in his sunken eves, and the continuous munching of the mouth which filled Rodwell with a sense of sick helplessness.

For several moments after the door had closed upon Mrs. Blund, the old man lay there regarding Rodwell steadfastly and saying nothing.

"What can you say to me?" he asked at last, in a low hoarse voice, angry with itself for the appeal it made.



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Rodwell braced himself up for the effort. It was a new experience for him to watch the death of a bad man. He had seen but little even of happy or peaceful deaths; never before had he been summoned to console the frightened spirit of a wicked man.

"There is only One to whom you can appeal," he answered. "If you truly and earnestly repent you of your sins; if you are heartily sorry for your misdoings, if the remembrance of them is grievous unto you, the burden of them intolerable, then turn unto Him with true faith and He will have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life."

The words were wrung from him, and in his own ears they sounded unreal and meaningless. In his heart he believed that the soul of the dying man was as surely doomed to punishment as the life of a man who has drunk a deadly poison is doomed to death. A shot arrow, he felt, could as easily turn in the air and find its way back to the bow, as the spirit of this depraved man could turn in its course to hell and find God. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. As the tree falls so shall it lie.

The eyes of the dying man were reading the clergy-man's face with a hard and searching scrutiny; the mouth still munched, the look of baffled fear had not left the eyes. Impatiently but slowly he lifted the sheet and rubbed it across his face.

"I'm not such a fool," he said, "as to think that by saying I am sorry for the past that I can alter the past. I am sorry for my sins. I keep saying to myself I am sorry; and I am sorry. But it doesn't ease me. I'm afraid to go as I am."

"God's only way," said Rodwell, "is repentance. There is nothing else."

"I'm not afraid of hell," said the doctor slowly. "I'm afraid because I don't know what's coming. When I'm alone by myself I'm afraid. I'm afraid of the silence, and I'm afraid of the darkness." His eyes drew farther into their sockets and the heavy brows worked together. "I wish I could die," he said, grinding his teeth angrily, "body and soul together."

He was like a prisoner locked in a cell, not thinking with repentance of the crime which had brought him there, but striving to hammer out a way of escape. He was convinced that he would live after the death of his body. He could not think of himself as not existing. But when he was alone he was sensible that outside the body there was only silence, darkness, loneliness, and self-consciousness. He saw no devils clamouring for his soul; he felt no reproof from a haloed face streaming in upon him from the gloom. Nothing there but cold, and silence, and darkness everlasting.

Almost every child has felt at some time that overwhelming consciousness of isolation which, when it comes, comes suddenly and only for a moment a little before slumber; that awful feeling of isolation in the midst of infinite space and eternal silence, that paralysing consciousness of one's personality hovering in a central darkness alone with itself, the infinitesimal but sole occupant of an infinite and a silent void. It was this feeling, persistent with the dying man all through his last two sleepless nights, which had convinced him of his immortality. There was something in him which could contemplate the death of his body,

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which could look ahead and see that body lowered into the earth; but this same imaginative faculty which could contemplate the destruction of death, could not be brought to think that itself would perish and dissolve into dust. It could look ahead to the grave, and beyond the grave into the awful and overwhelming certainty of everlasting existence. It could conceive of eternal life.

And it was because he had thought nothing at all of this everlasting existence, had lived indeed as if the earth were a thing detached from the universe, and human existence a thing separate from Life itself, that he now dreaded making the change from the known to the unknown, from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the visible to the invisible.

Rodwell saw in him a man who had lived hideously, and was now concerned at the last moment to avert punishment. He was moved with pity, though he could not help feeling disgust for the man, and aversion from his task. He strove with himself to believe that repentance, even at this late hour, might work a miracle and abrogate the laws of God. He struggled with himself to believe that even this life of sin might earn mercy, and not punishment.

"Let me assure you," he said softly, leaning forward in his chair, "that you have only one thing to do, and that is to make your peace with Almighty God." He paused, and then added solemnly: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the Propitiation for our sins. Turn to Him. Cry to Him out of the depth of your repentance. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

The doctor showed by his eyes that the counsel

was of no solace to his frightened soul. "It can't alter me," he said bitterly. "As I am, so I shall depart. I am sorry for the way I have lived. I wish I had lived differently. That's repentance; but it doesn't ease me. No; there is something else. I believe there is something else."

"There is nothing outside the mercy of God," said Rodwell.

"It's in the Bible, what I mean," answered the doctor, looking away and half closing his eyes.

"What is it?" asked Rodwell soothingly.

"It's a text, 'Except a man be born again——'
You know the words. Born again. What does
that mean?"

In the hours of his fear the words had come to him, floating through his consciousness like a long forgotten and only half-remembered strain of music. He could fasten upon these words no meaning, but he could not shake off from his mind the haunting suspicion that they had tremendous significance.

He had seen men notorious for brutality and wickedness transformed after a Revivalist meeting into upright, sober, clean-living and happy men. He had called this miracle in personality hysteria—given it a name and dismissed it. Now he recognized dimly and half-savagely that there was some power which could act as if law were not law, which could change in the twinkling of an eye the tone, the colour, the direction, nay, the very character of a human life. He had seen men born again What did it matter to him, who had stood at their death beds and had seen them depart with glory in their faces and a song on their lips, whether that new birth had followed from hysteria? Hysteria!—he had striven to fit a definition to the

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word, and had found none; perhaps hysteria, contemptuous though the word might be, signified some action of the soul, divine and eternal in its character. Whatever it meant, that word which could be used so easily and explained so hardly, it represented a fact. It was for this his soul was now in search; not for words, not for habits of thought—for fact.

"Born again," he repeated slowly. "What does that mean?"

"It means," said Rodwell, glancing at the primroses, "what I have been pressing upon you—a deep and hearty repentance for sin, and a longing after righteousness."

The doctor closed his eyes; the brows drew downward with the lids, and his face worked with vexation and disappointment. "It means more than that," he muttered.

For a moment the only sound in the room was the ticking of the clock.

"You will not go the road that the Church indicates," Rodwell said sadly. "You want to find your own road. There is no way except Christ. Turn to Him, make confession of your sin; plead to Him for mercy."

The eyes of the dying man opened slowly, and he looked long at Rodwell. "Tell me," he asked, "have you been born again?"

Rodwell did not answer.

"Have you ever known in your life," continued the dying man, "a moment when you felt that a great change happened to you? Are you pretending? Or, have you ever been conscious of a new birth in your soul?"

"I beg you," said Rodwell, laying a hand on the

bed, "not to concern yourself with these things. There is but one hope for you. The time is so short. Make your peace with God; confess your sins to Him; acknowledge His love in the sacrifice of Christ, and all will yet be well with you."

The dying man raised himself suddenly on an elbow. "You can't help me!" he cried angrily. He grabbed at Rodwell's wrist, and held it tightly, fiercely. As he spoke the fingers tightened their grasp, and he beat Rodwell's hand down to the bed, as it were for emphasis. "You don't know. You're pretending. The words you say are words for the living. I am a dying man. Have you the same message for the living and the dying? Have I a lifetime before me in which to work out repentance? You can't help me. You don't know. You have never been born again."

He released Rodwell's wrist and sank back on his pillows, breathless and angry. His face seemed to grow darker. The grinding of his mouth had something of ferocity in it. The terrible old man, who was clamouring for comfort, looked as if he could have murdered the priest at his side. He had hoped and he had been cheated. The lovely oasis had proved a mirage. His eyes cast upon Rodwell glances of bitter scorn and hard anger.

"Don't go before your God rebellious against His laws," pleaded Rodwell, feeling on his wrist the fierce impression of the dying fingers. "There is only the one way. Repent of your sins and turn to Him. Let me implore you with all the authority of the Church to acknowledge your sins before God, and to take the Holy Sacrament to your comfort."

The dying man was stung to fury by the clergy-

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man's inability to understand his need. He plucked up the sheet, dashed the sweat from his face and eves with it, and bent upon Rodwell a look of the most savage anger. "I don't believe vou know a word about it!" he growled wrathfully. "You'd sit there and watch me die and repeat your prayer-book like a boy saying a lesson. God, man, I'm dying. To-morrow morning my soul will have gone. Tomorrow morning /" He lay back again, gasping, "And you can't help me!" he moaned. chance; and you can't help me." He made another effort and leaned forward on his elbow. "Don't you know what it means, to be born again? Hasn't some one else ever told you? Born again. A new man. a new character, a different person. I'm asking for a miracle. Don't vou know? Don't vou really know?"

"No," said Rodwell, "I do not know."

"Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God," said the doctor, slowly and with a deep emphasis, pondering every word as he said it. "Except a man be born again. Have you ever seen the Kingdom of God? What is it? What do those words mean?"

Rodwell was deadly white. He tried to speak once or twice and then checked himself. His hardly-wrung compassion for the dying man was now changed to a profound conviction of his own appalling unworthiness to represent the sublime comfort of religion. Out of the inexhaustible stores of God's mercy he could bring nothing to the solace of this dying man. The words he had uttered were a formal utterance. He relied upon his Church. His own experience told him nothing.

It was a terrible discovery to make that he knew so little of the nature of God, that he could say no single word which had significance for this dying soul. He was overwhelmed by it. He was a minister of God, he was charged with the comfort of Divine mercy; it was his business to represent the clemency of God, nay, was he not the ordained mouthpiece of that Almighty Father Who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that all who believed in Him might have everlasting life?

And he was dumb. The words on his lips were the words of the Church. Out of his own heart, out of his own soul, out of his own experience and knowledge of God, he could say nothing.

He laid a hand upon the arm of the dying man, and spoke close to his ear. "I have had no great experience of God's love," he said earnestly. "But I promise you that with all my heart and soul I believe in that love. Let me pray for you. Let me pray with you."

He slipped quietly upon his knees at the bedside and prayed. He prayed for the dying man, and he prayed for himself. . . .

When he opened his eyes he found that the face of the doctor was turned away from him, and that in it now there was a drawn look of agony as though his sufferings were intolerable. The eyes were closed and still. The lips were drawn inward and did not move. The whole countenance was contorted and hardened and wrinkled.

Bending over the bed, his hand on the dying man's, Rodwell said gently: "Let me administer the Holy Sacrament. It has converted men in conditions as desperate as yours. Even at the last moment it has



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brought light and peace. Your repentance is very real and deep; carry it to God in the Holy Sacrament and lean upon His mercy."

As if Rodwell only vexed him, and with his face still contorted and lined, the dying man slowly shook his head from side to side.

"Don't refuse the Sacrament," Rodwell pleaded. "Don't refuse it."

The doctor opened his eyes slowly. "It isn't the Church I want," he said hoarsely; "I want God." A light came suddenly into his eyes. He looked at Rodwell earnestly. "Will you go now," he cried, "quickly, and ask Eyre to come and see me?"

The request was like a stab at Rodwell's heart.

"If you want God," he pleaded, "why do you send for man? You refuse the Sacrament. God is in the Sacrament. Believe me, God will come to you in that most solemn service if you ask for it humbly and with repentance."

"If you won't," said the dying man wearily, closing his eyes again, "ask my wife to go! I want that man. I believe he knows. I believe he knows what those words mean. I want him quickly."

Once again the only sound in the room was the ticking of the clock.

"I will go to him," said Rodwell presently, in a hoarse voice. He bent over the dying man. "Forgive me," he said, "for failing you. It is not Christ who has failed: it is I."

The dying man opened his eyes and looked at Rodwell sadly and tragically: "Try and learn what those words mean," he muttered. "Born again! It's the bad man's only chance."

As Rodwell hurried through the darkening streets.

he was conscious in his soul of the most poignant humiliation. Nothing, he felt, could have been harder for his proud and refined spirit to bear than the knowledge that he was without experience in the comfort of religion. Nothing, he thought, could so shock and mortify his soul, as the discovery that the Church to which he was so nobly devoted inspired him with no saving consolation for a man frightened to go before his God. He was to drink deeper of the cup of humiliation; he was to feel far more sharply the insufficiency of his own personality. But for the present this sufficed.

Easy to pray, easy to preach. Did he not find a sensuous gratification in publicly rehearsing with the age-hallowed circumstance of catholic worship the lovely and sonorous liturgy of the English Church? Did it not gratify his refinement to hear proceeding out of his mouth that magnificent expression of God's will towards man? Yes, an easy and a pleasant thing to lead the public worship of God in the great and splendid traditions of the Church.

But to bring Christ to the deathbed of a wicked man, to convince a despairing soul that death has no sting and the grave no victory; here was a matter needing something more than ability to read from a printed page. What did he know in his own life of infinite compassion; what did he know in his own heart of the miracle, the amazing and confounding miracle, of instant forgiveness of sins?

And he was hurrying to call to the dying man whom he had failed to comfort, a minister of a dissenting church.

His situation of shame was one he could never have imagined. Bitterness so sharp, humiliation

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so deep, he could not have conjectured. But as he went, still feeling on his wrist the clutch of those dying fingers, his noble nature held him to the true point: it was not God who had failed, it was not the Church

that had failed; it was he himself.

He was shown, by the wondering little servant maid who opened the door to him, straight into the room where the minister was sitting with his wife. The Bible was open on the table between them, and Simon Eyre rose from it, taking off his spectacles, as Rodwell entered. Husband and wife were both surprised by the visit, and both of them remarked the haggard expression of the young clergyman's countenance.

"I have come from Dr. Blund," Rodwell said.
"He is dying, and he wishes to see you."

"But." began Simon Evre.

"Yes, I have been to him. I have failed to comfort him. He is afraid to die; and nothing that I could say helped him."

"I will go," said the old minister, very quietly and solemnly.

His wife assisted him to put on his overcoat, gave him his steeple-crown hat and stick, and wrapped a black shawl over his shoulders. Then she turned and laid her hand upon Rodwell's arm: "Stay with me a minute," she whispered, regarding him with kind eyes.

She went with her husband to the door, and presently returned to Rodwell with the same kind look in her eyes. The quickness of her sympathy had detected instantly the hurt in Rodwell's heart. The nobility of her nature had been moved by his frank confession of failure. She knew, she had always known, and far more profoundly than Beatrice knew it, how

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far off the brilliant and successful young priest of the Established Church stood from the secret of Christ.

"You will not upbraid yourself," she said, coming close to Rodwell, laying a hand upon his arm, and looking deeply into his eyes, "because you have failed to comfort this poor man?"

"There is no one else to upbraid," answered Rodwell, laying his hand upon hers, and gently pressing it. "God cannot fail. The Church has not failed. It is only I who am to blame."

"The Master will not ask you to upbraid yourself."

The quiet voice moved him, but it was the serenity of the spirit shining from her eyes which tempted him for a moment to open the doors of his heart to her. If any person knew the secret of Christ he felt that this woman knew it. Just for the moment, he came out of himself and was very near to her.

Her countenance bore a strange resemblance to the unforgettable face of Catharine Booth. It was one of those gracious faces in which tenderness shows as strength, and of which we say that they are illuminated. Beneath the almost transparent skin glowed a soft and tender radiance; the lips were clothed with everlasting tranquillity; through the eyes one looked into unfathomable calm.

As Rodwell rested his troubled gaze upon that shining lifted face of the old and feeble lady, something dark and oppressive passed out of his soul, and something entered and took its place which was calm and peace-giving.

"I must upbraid myself," he said, smiling gently into her eyes, "until I have learned to deliver His message faithfully."

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"That is never easy," she answered.

"To deliver it to a man like poor Blund is very difficult."

"Harder surely to a good man!" she said gently.

He thought for a moment. "Yes, that is true. It is often the person most conscious of sin who is most conscious of his need. But Blund's sin has been exceptional. His life has been very, very bad. It is only his extremity which enables me, I fear, to think charitably of him."

They were still standing near to each other.

Her face was raised to his smiling and shining, his, smiling too, was inclined to hers. He had recovered himself, he was again the cultivated disciple of a great tradition, the educated man conscious of the dignity of his office. He had not ceased to regard the woman with great reverence, but his mind recoiled from the prospect of any intimate conversation with her on sacred things.

"I think it is a great help," she said, "to remember the legend about our Lord and the poor dog lying dead by the roadside. Do you recollect how when every one hurried by with averted face, He paused beside the poor hated carcase, and said, Sea-pearls have not the whiteness of its teeth? He discovered in it something of which He could speak well. There is always that something in the worst of us, don't you think?"

"What will your husband say to poor Blund?" asked Rodwell, studying her face.

"He will try, I think, to show him that without conversion there is no grace, and without grace there is no salvation."

The words did not hurt Rodwell as he had expected they would.

"It is not easy," he said, "to teach a dying man

what we mean by grace."

"Easier to the dying than to the living," she corrected gently.

- "And conversion," Rodwell said; "do not the dying who have lived as if there were no God, feel that it is late to talk of that?"
 - "Not when they send for a minister."
- "Don't you think that may be in the nature of a formality?"
 - "Not with the wicked."
 - "No; not with the wicked, I suppose."

For a moment they were silent, looking at each other.

"Mr. Rodwell," she said impulsively, and laid her hand gently upon his, touching the very wrist where Blund's fingers had fastened angrily; "you are doing a great work here, you have brought happiness and goodness into many homes: remember, although you have not given peace to this one unhappy soul, that behind your work and in your work, always, there has been and is the Master,"

there has been and is the Master,"
His face grew suddenly grave. "Without Him,"
he said, "I could do nothing."

She looked at him for a long time, and withdrew her hand slowly from his arm. "So long as we are sure of that," she said, "the weakest of us are strong, and those of us who stand in the most dangerous places are safe."

He feared, he shrank from, finding himself in a position inferior to this noble woman. It was not for himself he feared. He represented a Church;

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loyalty to that Church made him careful how he allowed his own necessities and his own need for instruction and help to lower the honour and the power of the Church. He felt that he would like her to tell him what she understood by "grace," and "conversion": he was on the point of asking her to tell him; but not so quickly can the restraint of long training be thrown aside and the soul left free and enfranchised to declare her needs.

He talked to her for a little longer, drawing his soul gradually away from her sympathy, and then, saying that he had a church meeting at his house, he took his leave of her and went out into the street.

As he climbed the hill he found a deepening anxiety in his heart to discover the meaning of those old phrases "grace" and "conversion." His mind had been too deeply beguiled with theological terms, to have acquaintance with religious terms. He was more used to such terms as "transcendence" and "immanence" than to those others, "grace" and "conversion." Yet, he recollected now, those old words ran through all the literature of the saints. The men who had used them were among the greatest of men. They had meant something by those words: those words had meant something to them.

To be born again; grace; conversion—he wondered what those words really signified in human experience.

When he entered the vicarage he found that the three clergymen who had come to discuss with him the work of a Church Guild were already arrived. They greeted him brightly and chaffingly. They had taken French leave to light their pipes. They were in the mood for a long talk.

"I heard old Blund is desperately ill," said one of them; "is that true?"

"Yes, I believe so," Rodwell answered.

"You'll be glad, I should think, to be rid of him," said another. "A dreadful old reprobate; a frightful man to have in a parish."

They fell to discussing the business of the Guild, the Guild which had for its object the teaching of Church history, the education of the West in the great tradition of the Catholic Church.

When the business of the evening was over, Rodwell, getting up from his chair, walked to the mantelpiece and leaning his back against it, looked quietly and questioningly at his guests.

"I'd rather like to ask you men a question," he said. "Suppose you were sent for by a dying man who confessed his sins, experienced no conviction of security from it, and asked you for something else, asked you how he could be born again; what would you answer?"

"Wouldn't that be a case," said one of the clergymen, smiling a little, "for the Salvation Army?"

Another, who took the question seriously, replied: "Repentance would justify me, however bad he might have been, in administering the Eucharist. If he found no consolation there, I could do no more for him."

"And yet," said Rodwell slowly, "one fancies our Lord in such a case speaking something definite and personal to the man."

"But surely," said the third clergyman, a little timorous at appearing to instruct Rodwell and yet made brave by loyalty to his Church; "but surely when we bring the Eucharist to a dying man we bring our B lessed Lord. Surely."

Rodwell answered: "Sometimes we fail to bring peace even then. One cannot think of His ever failing."

"It is surely very rare when the Eucharist fails!"

"One case of failure would be sufficient to make me think," Rodwell replied, and felt once more the fingers of Blund closing round his wrist.

One of the men, after a little silence, looked up, with a smile: "You're beginning to fear that old Blund may send for you!" he said. "I shouldn't worry. It's not in the least likely. That kind of sinner dies hard to the last."

CHAPTER XV

RODWELL MAKES A DISCOVERY

It was from Mr. Pilkin, early the next morning, that Rodwell learned of the death of Joe Blund. There was a look of sly and malicious triumph in the twinkling eyes of the lame sexton as he made his announcement.

"Died at four o'clock this morning," he said. "Died happy. Died praising God for His infinite mercies. Praying he was; his soul went out on an Amen, and left a smile on his face; like a sunset. Ah, he was a beauty and no mistake; it's a pity the good old-fashioned Church of England haven't got the credit for his soul. Something real to have saved a soul like his. Mr. Eyre, the Wesleyan minister, did the work of salvation. Quiet man he is, Mr. Rodwell; a very quiet man. No noise about him: no pushing and blowing. He was with old Blund to the last. Came home at five this morning, leaving the widow happy. That's work that is. That's religion that is. Ah, I'm sorry old Blund didn't give you the chance. It would have been a credit to the good old-fashioned Church of England. In my young days it was reckoned disreputable for any man, woman, or child to die without the Church of England. But, there, times has changed. Nothing isn't

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what it was when I first give up everything and consequated myself to the Church of England."

At first Rodwell was disposed to go and ask Simon Eyre in what manner and by what means he had consoled the dreadful fear of the dying man. Then he made an excuse to himself; the old minister would be tired; he would be resting after the fatigue of the night; it would be uncharitable to disturb him. Later. Later in the day.

He felt strangely unfitted for work. His sense of humiliation, in which there was nothing of bitterness or envy, was keener and more real than it had been on the previous evening. He had lain sleepless through the greater part of the night, and had risen without any sense of refreshment. He felt the dread of disaster before him. He determined to rest. He would go and see Beatrice, and spend the morning with her on the cliffs. Her quiet mind would medicine him to peace. He would lose this ominous feeling of catastrophe ahead of him, and regain his old composure.

He went down into the town, and met Captain Duck by the bridge.

"Have you heard the news?" asked the captain, leaning on his stick and chuckling. "Laugh! I've been laughing all night. My next door neighbour—Stringer, Captain Stringer—he's summoned to go on the jury at the Assizes! Think of it, Mr. Rodwell! Directly I heard of it, I says to ma, "He'll make himself foreman for a certainty; and he'll give the judge and the barristers and the prisoners and the policemen Hackel and Heagle till they won't know whether they're a law court or a Sunday School. Think of him, Captain Stringer, having to sit still

and listen to the arguments of other men! Why, it'll madden the old crow. He'll go off his rocker. I shouldn't be surprised if the judge don't have to commit him for contempt o' court."

Rodwell inquired after the mine and learned that Captain Duck and Mr. Letheby were expecting to be told by Mr. Jevvers, any day now that they were both millionaires.

Rodwell said good-bye to the chuckling captain, crossed the bridge, and mounted the road through the towans to the cliff. It was a relief to him to gain the isolation and the freedom of the tall headland. He felt that in leaving the town below him, he had shaken off a part of his burden. The kind blue sea lav winking in the sunshine. The wind was cold to his flesh and sweet in his nostrils. From the damp turf of the cliffs and from the gorse and bracken drenched with a glittering dew which here and there the sun fired to drops of flame, there came a scent and a freshness which acted like balm to his mind. He let his gaze wander slowly and lingeringly down the cliff; tufts of yellow primroses gleamed palely beside the mossy trunks of trees, and violets could be seen beside the grey and lichened stones which hung half buried, from the cliff side. Below the wood, on the shining crescent of white sand, deep pools of still green water held the reflection of the tall rocks underneath which they sheltered from the sands. Farther off, a white curve of ruffled foam all along the coast marked where the little waves were breaking, with a croon to the Beyond these gentle and melodious ripples, smooth as glass and wonderfully soundless, the blue sea lay shining and twinkling in the sunlight under a sky which was white and muffled with a fine haze.

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He walked forward through the crystal air, conscious of a lark's song above his head, reciting in his mind the sonnet of Arnold:

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee . . . Of toil unsevered from tranquillity.

Beneath the repose and quiet of her outward appearance Nature was accomplishing, everywhere that he might look, the work of the Spring, the miracle of the new birth. He thought for a moment of the fragile snowdrops which had grown even under the iron heel of winter, had thrust their frail heads through the frost and snow, dreaded by huge forest trees, and had unfolded their delicate and exquisite beauty to the plunging winds and furious rains of February, They brought his thoughts back to Beatrice. How sublime was her courage, how unfathomable the secret of her respose, how great the struggle and resolution of her soul.

It was like hearing of unsuspected bereavement to learn at the Headland that she was not within. The servant told him that Beatrice had gone to Mrs. Blund immediately the news had reached her of the doctor's death. Rodwell stood irresolute for a moment and as he waited the servant told him that Miss Taylor was at home and asked him if he would come in.

"No," he answered. "I am going to walk along the cliff. Will you tell Miss Haly when she comes back?"

He passed through the garden again, and came out on to the rough road. As he got upon the turf and set his face to the cliff, he was hailed from behind by Shorder who was galloping towards the house.

"Miss Haly not in?" demanded Shorder, a serious

and anxious look in his face as he pulled up his snorting horse in front of Rodwell.

"No, she is out."

'Out! Confound it; hang it; what on earth does she want to be out for?"

Rodwell wondered what serious business it could be to make the squire so furious and dark.

"She has gone to Mrs. Blund," he said quietly.

"Ah, I'll go there! Old Joe paid the debt of nature this morning; they tell me you weren't there, eh? You couldn't do the trick for him after all? The opposition shop had to be sent for!" He paused, and then added turning his horse's head away: "Well, it's the best thing I've heard about you. You were honest with him. He sowed wild oats all his life, and he isn't going to reap milk and honey. I'm glad you didn't play the Absolution game."

He laughed bitterly, pressed his horse with his knees, and rode away like a man with a purpose.

Rodwell did not trouble to think any longer what it was which had brought Shorder post-haste and with such a sudden seriousness to Beatrice. His mind was thrown back upon itself by the words Shorder had said.

He asked himself, after all, if he had not been right even in his failure? The relief brought to the dying sinner by Simon Eyre, was it not possibly a frightful illusion? The man had lived the life of a brute. He had not only degraded and depraved his own body, he had dragged his wife down with him, he had ruined other men, and he had brought horrible shame and sin and controversy into many an otherwise happy home. His whole life had been spent in opposition to the spirit of religion. All his energies had been

given to opposing the difficult progress of spiritual evolution. Could he be excused for all those sins, and the consequences of his dreadful life be undone; could it be, merely by a repentance born of terror at the moment of dissolution, that a soul which had directed itself so absolutely to hell could pass from the body into the contrary direction which led to God?

He had been walking slowly, but as these thoughts paced through his mind, he increased his speed, and went swiftly forward along the cliff, his head bent down, his eyes upon the turf—unconscious of sea and shore and sky.

He found himself in a dilemma. He could not bring himself to believe that a death-bed repentance had won salvation for the dead doctor; honestly and sincerely he could not believe that; but, at the same time, he could not bring himself to think either that he had said all there was to have been said, or that his Master would have spoken to the dying man as he had spoken to him.

The truth, perplexing and torturing his mind, came to him with irresistible force. He had not said all that there was to say. Christ would have spoken differently.

It might be, as he most honestly held, that the soul of the dying man would reap the frightful harvest he had sown. That might be true; he could not think otherwise. But, as surely as there was a sky above the earth, as surely as there was air to breathe and grass to walk upon, so surely, he knew, that Christ would have said some universal thing to the dying man which would instantly have calmed his fears and eased his tortured mind.

He began to imagine what Simon Eyre had said.

"Conversion." "Grace." "Salvation." Conversion—a turning round. It meant that a wicked man, in the twinkling of an eye, could turn about; that he could of a sudden alter the polarity of his soul. In an instant he could face to heaven and away from hell; in an instant he could desire virtue and eschew evil; in an instant he could worship God and abandon Satan.

Why, it was like saying that in the twinkling of an eye Robespierre might have become Francis of Assisi!

Could a man change his drift in that manner? Nay, could a man thus absolutely transform his very character and identity, the very threads and fibres, the very stuff and essence of his personality? Conversion!—he had rescued the word from what he deemed its cant use, but it now stood to him for the abnormal and the miraculous, the unthinkable and the inconceivable: he turned away from it. Back went his thoughts to the bedside of the dying man, and once again his brain beat for the real answer to his problem—the method of the Master. How would the Light of the World have spoken there? What would the Redeemer of the World have said to that frightened soul? Ah, that was the point, that was the key to the riddle that baffled him.

It was because he could not say, after the deepest, most eager, and most searching questioning, what Christ would have said, that he made his great discovery. He was Christless.

It came to him gradually and quietly as he walked swiftly forward in the morning air, but when it

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came home to him, and when he recognized it, it was like a stunning blow shattering the whole structure of his soul. He stopped suddenly, leaned heavily upon his stick, and gazed, haggard and drawn, seeing nothing, into the stillness of the air.

What had he discovered? That he had lost his Christ? No, that he had never had a Christ. Never in his whole life had he known the mind of the Master. Never once in all his enthusiasm for the Church and his devotion to Religion had he felt in his soul the Presence of the saving Christ.

Horror is for the priest who loses his faith. Despair is for the priest who discovers that he never had a faith.

The ethics of Jesus; yes, he had believed them. The Cross of Christ; no, he had not understood, he had not bowed himself there in comprehending adoration.

No words can paint the blackness of despair which visited the soul of this man as he made his great and appalling discovery. He experienced no horror, he was conscious of no sense of harrowing loss. He was conscious only of an instant despair—the despair of intolerable loneliness. It was not a new loneliness into which he had entered, but the habitual loneliness of his soul realized for the first time.

It was nearly an hour before his mind could see his situation clearly and distinctly. He was walking forward again, not hurriedly now, but slowly and sorrowfully.

He had withstood the arguments of Shorder, he had laughed away that crude materialism; it was the drunken and degraded doctor clutching his wrist and

bidding him answer on his life if he himself had been born again, who had brought home to him his Christlessness.

He recalled his first vision of that depraved old man as he had seen him leaning against the sand-swept porch of the tavern with its mocking title, The Angel, blistering on its shabby walls. How confident he had been then, how eager to work for the reformation of the town; how little had he recked that the terrible old man glaring at him from under the porch would in two years reveal to him that he was without a Christ.

Spent with his long walk, and broken in spirit, he turned at last, and began the return journey. He had gone but a little way when he saw Beatrice coming towards him from the distance. The sight of her recalled him to the world. Perhaps the sight of any living person would have roused him from the stupor of his mind. But Beatrice most of all. He began to think how he should greet her, what he should say to her. He would put a brave face upon the matter. He must say nothing about his discovery. He must wait until he had thought it out, thought it out by himself.

She had heard from Mrs. Blund about his failure to comfort the doctor. She knew that he would feel the humiliation, and she hoped that he had come to her for comfort. She did not guess that he had made, through this one failure, the great discovery for which she had waited.

The words which she was so fond of, "while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him," recurred to her mind as her eyes rested on the approaching form of the man she loved. She could not distin-

guish his face, but by his carriage she knew that his

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spirit had worn out the frail body in another of his struggles to find repose. A great tenderness filled her heart. The mother in her went out in yearning towards him.

If only he would come to her as a child! He had but to cry to her, he had but to stretch out his hand. and she would take him to her breast and breathe peace into his wounded soul.

As he drew nearer to her he was conscious of the spiritual distance which separated them. The calm which made her presence so infinitely pleasant to him was a repose never to be learned, never to be bought even with tears. She stood, by the very nature of her being, on the hill and in the sunlight. He, by his destiny, by the disposition he had inherited and by the character which circumstance had shaped for him, stood in the valley of darkness and battle where peace was not to be found.

When they met face to face she saw that he was grey and drawn, and that his breath came with difficulty.

- "You have walked too far, Richard," she said.
- "Yes. You were not at home. I walked without measuring the distance."
- "We will go back slowly; you must take luncheon with us."
- "I will rest with you a little," he said, looking at his watch. "Yes, if I may, I will lunch with you. I did not know it was so late."
 - "You are worried, Richard," she said soothingly.
- "Yes. I had a painful scene last night with poor Blund."
 - "You must not let that distress you. He was T.V.

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happy when he died. That is what makes you anxious. You can forget now that he was unhappy when you saw him."

"Ought he to have been happy?" he asked, indisposed to accept from another the verdict of his failure. "Do you think that a death-bed repentance does away with a whole life of evil?"

"No," she answered in a low voice. "But Calvary does."

He started and looked at her. "Calvary does?" he questioned quietly.

"It must have been hard for you," she said. "I can feel how you would shrink from the scene. I know how your mind must have quivered as he appealed to you out of his fear."

"Yes, it was dreadful; it was horrible," he said.

"But you must forget it. He saw at last that the sins of the whole world are as nothing to the love of Calvary. Think of that disproportion. He saw it. He realized it. I think it broke his heart. He died repentant and happy; almost his last words, Richard, were 'not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences.'"

"I am glad," he said.

"And you will think no more about your difficulty in giving him comfort?"

"I shall never forget that."

"But why?"

"I might be sent for again to a deathbed like his, to a deathbed worse than his. If Shorder sent for me—what should I say?"

" Well?"

"I should fail again."

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"I do not think so."

"Yes, I should fail again."

She was silent for a moment. Then she said, "Do you mean that if you yourself tried to comfort a dying man, you would fail? Yes, then: of course you would fail. But you have something better to give than yourself."

"No," he said, "I have not."

"But, Richard. . . ."

"It is my office to have something better than myself," he said. "But I do not possess it. I have just found out. I do not possess it."

Into her face as he spoke came a sudden beauty. He had made the great discovery! It had happened; the longed-for event had come; he stood by himself, all by himself, conscious now of the heart, no longer satisfied, either with his own intellect or the traditions of a church. The miracle had happened. He had discovered the helplessness of humanity. He had discovered the need of the soul. He had begun, at last, to see into the heart of things.

She had inspired Shorder to argue with him, to show him, through controversy, that he leaned upon a reed. That had failed. But the reed had pierced his hand at last, it had broken at the bedside of a frightened soul, and now his wounded hands must, must stretch out to grasp the Rock. There was nothing else. No matter how the discovery had been made; it was made. He knew now what she had known so well of late, that, faithful and devoted servant though he was, yet was he without a Master.

"To know that you do not possess it, is to possess it," she said. The tone of assured conviction and safe knowledge in her voice, though she did not

dream it, hurt him a little, hurt him because it argued in his mind her consciousness of her superiority to him.

- "I am not so sure," he answered.
- "To ask is to receive," she said.
- "I am not so sure."
- "When you ask, Richard," she answered quietly, you will know. Really, you will know."

After a silence he said: "I met Shorder this morning. He congratulated me on my honesty in not offering comfort to Blund. The point is arguable. The more we know of the physical universe the more do we discover that it is governed by unchangeable laws. I am not so sure that penitence ever can blot out the past. The consequences of an act, however greatly repented of, remain. Take the case of Blund. I know of two homes in the town which he ruined. absolutely ruined: the husband died a brutal man. the wife is living in the slums of Devonport; at least one of her daughters is following her life. If any effect can be traced to any cause, the ruin of that once happy home can be traced to Blund. Is he to be pardoned?—and those whom he ruined, because they have not repented, are they to be punished?"

"Oh, I think," she answered, lifting her face, "that if he had ruined every home in England, every home in the world, every man, woman and child in the world, that work would be as a grain of sand at the foot of Calvary."

"I am not so sure," replied Rodwell, with energy. "No, I cannot think that. I do not see the justice of it, for one thing; for another thing the thought is unreasonable."

Still with her face raised, she said: "You will know

it, Richard; one day you will know it; 'a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.' One day you will sound the depths of that compassion, and then you will not ask to see reason or justice in anything; He will suffice."

"I begin to think," he said in a low voice, "that God does not so much save souls as He saves temperaments. There are some, it is true, that would not be persuaded. There are others who cannot be persuaded."

"Do not forget," she said quietly, "the surprised cry, "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink?"

"Yes," he answered, "philanthropy is something."

"Richard," she said softly, with a strange energy in the low, quiet, and caressing voice, "you will go further, though you do not think so now. I know you will go further: I know you will reach the goal. Yes, there is something more than philanthropy. is love of God. There is the surrender of everything in our nature to that. You cannot stop where you are. The need in your own heart will drive you on. You will come at last to the secret of existence—the loss of the creature in the Creator, the finding of the son in the Father. Is it presumptuous of me to speak to you? I love you: I must speak. All through these difficult months you have worked knowingly for the Church, and unknowingly for the Master. I have been waiting; I have been watching; I have been praying for the other knowledge to come to you. Think what your work will be when you work knowingly for Him! Think what it will be to your energies when He and He alone is your authority, and your tradition.

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and your God! To what great ends you will go; to what great ends will you carry these people with you. You have been Orpheus charming through music; then you will be Paul converting through Christ. It is the last discovery you have to make. Make that, and everything will be plain to you. You will have no more unrest, no more disquiet, no more unsatisfied longings. All that is, all that was, all that is to be, is contained in that knowledge. To know Him is to have life—life eternal."

Her voice was like a music in his ears. He could have listened to her for ever. For ever the words might have had as little meaning for him as they had now, but still he would desire to be quite quiet listening to her. She seemed like a good angel exhorting to some divine ecstasy impossible for flesh and blood a mortal seeking nothing more than rest and sleep. He was conscious of her beauty and of the profundity of her character. He loved her then more than he had ever loved her. But her words had no meaning for him. She moved in a world other than his. She saw nature with other eyes. Her language was not his language. In his heart there sounded a monotonous and despairing knell—"She will never understand me." He felt that she was further from him than ever; that between them was a gulf which even love itself could not bridge. She would be for ever on the mountains of a shining land: he would be for ever in the valley of a dark and troubled world.

What did her words mean? Had he not prayed, had he not desired, had he not received as well as given the most comfortable Sacrament? What peace had ensued, what rest, what tranquillity? People were ruled by phrases. She spoke about making "the sur-

render." What did that mean? If he asked her, could she tell him? Surrender!—had he not given up everything?—had he not sacrificed everything in life to receive into his soul the secret of the universe? Yes, he had done that; his life testified to it; and he knew no more than when he first abandoned his Orders.

"I will come to you, Beatrice," he said, "another day, and we will talk about this matter when I have thought it out, when I have thought all round it. For the present——"

She laid her hand upon his arm: "Thought, Richard, will not help. Forgive me; I am sure it will not help." She paused, and then lifting her face, she said earnestly: "Let your heart carry you to Heaven."

"We mean the same thing, perhaps."

"No. Different things—quite different."

"Thought can come from the heart."

"Only to fall upon its journey! Richard, I am more sure of this that I am of anything, that one only reaches to the end of being in an uprush of feeling. Thought can carry a man to the stars; but it stops him there to weigh them and to measure the distances. To reach out to the end of being, to sound the great depths of the infinite, to be at rest in so vast a universe, we must wing the soul with the yearning and the need of the heart."

"You are quite right, Beatrice," he answered, as if to soothe her. "But you must make allowance. What seems so easy to you may be very difficult to another. To some it may be impossible."

"The things," she quoted, smiling gently into the sky, "which are impossible with men are possible with God."

"Will it content you," he asked, "if I tell you that I shall pray for His guidance?"

"No!" she answered quietly.

"What more can I do?"

"You can pray for His love."

He felt his heart burn within him. For a moment he knew that unearthly affection which colours all the written words of the old mystics. For a moment he knew the warmth and fire which makes for conversion and revivalism. Just for a moment he was conscious of the loss of self in an outpouring of love which lifted him above the earth.

"Very well," he said, "I will pray for love."

They walked on for some paces in silence, very slowly. for he was tired and spent. The tide which had drawn far out across the sands began now to turn. The waves came with a deeper noise. The leaden surf was flecked to the horizon with foam. The brightness of the early morning had faded from the sky, leaving it grev and sullen and overcast. The bitter and cruel wind which came to them off the sea had in it something antagonistic to earth and contemptuous of man. It filled the sea, the earth, and the sky with a rough and bitter sound. Over the grey sea, and over the shadowed darkness of the cliff where they walked, there settled, as the homeless wind whimpered and snarled and menaced, a gloom and an unkindness which seemed to alienate the earth from the shining and quiescent universe.

"We must hurry," he said, "or we shall be caught in the rain."

As they walked forward a little faster, she told him that she had asked Mrs. Blund to be the matron of the Home of Rest, and then said to him: "I am going away for a few weeks, a month, perhaps; will you wait, Richard, before acting upon your final decision, till I come?"

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"Yes. I will come to you first of all. There is no one else."

"Now we will talk no more about the matter." She put out one of her hands in front of her, and raised her face to the sky. "I felt a spot of rain," she said.

"Are you going to London?" he asked.

"No; I am going abroad; I am going to Spain."

"By the way," he said, "that reminds me of Pedro, and Pedro reminds me of Shorder; and that reminds me, again, that Shorder arrived at the Headland almost as early as I did this morning, and he appeared to be very anxious to see you. He rode away to try and discover you."

"Yes, we met."

"He is not in any special trouble, I hope?"

Beatrice did not answer quickly. "I think it is an old trouble," she said at last.

He looked at her in some surprise. "Are you going to Spain on his account?" he asked. Then he checked himself. "But perhaps I ought not to ask you that?"

"No"; she replied, "don't ask me that. Better say, if any ask, that I have gone abroad. I am taking Christabel. We shall stay a few days in Paris."

At that moment, for the first time in his life, he was jealous of another man. That the shadow of Shorder's life should fall across the pure radiance of Beatrice's soul was a thought which angered him. As though nature were in sympathy with him the heavens and the earth at that moment became suddenly black.

"Come, Richard," she called, running forward:
"it's going to be a deluge."
And as she spoke, the rain came down with a roar,

and blotted out everything.



CHAPTER XVI

GIVING SOME GOSSIP AND RUMOURS CON-CERNING SHORDER

A WEEK after Dr. Blund's funeral, and three days after Beatrice and Christabel had set out on their journey abroad, the bouncing relict of the late Mr. Banthorpe gave a tea-party in the back parlour of the little shop down by the harbour, which had to do with tarpaulins and which bore over its front the name of Peter Chumble, that being the exact cognomen of the mild little man with whom the widow had consoled herself for the irreparable loss of the released Mr. Banthorpe.

Among her guests were Captain and Mrs. Duck, Mr. and Mrs. Biddicombe (late Borrowsbie) and Mrs. Pamfrey, the head gardener's wife at The Hangers, whose husband was to come in later on. Captain and Mrs. Duck, by virtue of their rank, were the chief guests; Mrs. Biddicombe, by virtue of her wealth, was the most popular guest before her face and the most criticized behind her back; and Mrs. Pamfrey, by virtue of her unequalled ability in gossip and scandal was regarded on all hands as a long way the most brilliant and interesting guest.

Mrs. Chumble had tried very hard to induce Mrs. Dumper to accept an invitation to this her first party, for among the small society of Bartown the rare presence of Mrs. Dumper at a tea party set an almost royal mark of approval upon that festivity. But Mrs. Dumper had declined. Mrs. Dumper had no opinion of widows who married again. She had her two gentlemen to look after. Moreover she had informed the servant girl at Gun Cottage, whose brain was kept perpetually dancing, day and night, with the ceaseless and salutary flow of Mrs. Dumper's Maxims, that she would as soon drink poison or swallow dynamite as admit into the polished temple of her body a single morsel or the littlest crumb from one of Mrs. Chumble's cakes.

But, even without the presence of Mrs. Dumper, the party was a great success. The little stuffy back parlour—though the smell of tarpaulins would enter whenever the door was opened—wore a bright and cheerful appearance, with its thick carpet, its loaded table, and its altogether elegant suite of saddle-bag furniture. There was not an inch of mantelpiece which was not occupied by china dogs, sea-shells, and vases of coloured glass. There was scarcely an inch of wall, too, which was not occupied by plush-framed photographs of innumerable Banthorpes. Not only did the daughter who lived in Dulwich, and her scared-looking young husband, gaze haughtily from the wall-but every single member of that young lady's nice little brood, mostly in a bald-headed and bibbed condition, glowered with a grave perplexity upon the scene before them. The Miss Banthorpe who was in a City office smirked upon the guests from a wooden frame ornamented with burnt flowers; and near her, in somewhat plainer frames, the three young gentlemen with whom she had, we hope successively and not simultaneously.

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walked out, surveyed the tea-party with rather bored eyes, from above the clerkly flourish of their autographs.

Little Mr. Chumble, sitting meekly at the tail of the table, wore upon his lined and rather scarlet face a perpetual smile. He was one of those men who go through life saying, "Don't notice me: have the goodness to pass me'over: I'm nothing: tread upon me, but don't treat me as a man." He wore his clothes as a rabbit uses his burrow or as an oyster uses his shell. huddled into them and under them: it was his clothes he presented to the world, not himself. A shrinking man. A man who crept away into his least reachable brain-cell, and tucked himself up there like a bumble bee in its winter quarters. He was a very little old red thing in a great deal of clothes. It was only when you thought about it that you remembered he had red hair, darker eyelashes, gold-speckled eyes, a long waggling nose and a mouth like an old elastic band. His chief occupation at the party appeared to be the laying of his hairy hands upon the table in front of him and contemplating them with a secret amusement. only changed this attitude when his wife requested him to pass anything to the visitors.

Now and then his wife would attempt to draw him into the conversation. "We're lucky, aren't we, Peter, to have Mrs. Duck here before the Captain makes a fortune out of his mining, and she has a carriage of her own to drive out in with the family, and is too proud to speak to humble-going folk like you and me!" But Mr. Chumble only answered such appeals as this by glancing grinningly at Captain Duck, and winking one of his eyes in a manner which expressed an open mind but a shrewd suspicion concerning fortunes in general and Captain Duck's in particular

Not so Captain Duck. "Yes, we're doing very well, I think," he said, in his slow but cheerful fashion, eating steadily at the dishes. "Mr. Letheby and me. Partners we are. Yes, we're doing very well, I think. We've got a tip-top lawyer to help us. One of the best in London. As I tell ma, if we don't make a fortune, it won't be the fault of that lawyer."

"You're referring, I suppose, to Mr. Jevvers?" said the all-knowing Mrs. Pamfrey.

"Peter, pass the buttered toast to Mrs. Duck," said Mrs. Chumble, taking Mrs. Biddicombe's cup.

"Jevvers is his name," replied Captain Duck, with his mouth full. "If ever I see a knowing man, and if I'm a judge of character at all, that there Jevvers is a knowing one."

"You'll be worth your thousands, my dear," said Mrs. Chumble to little Mrs. Duck, who was smiling patiently behind her spectacles and hoping that the youngest baby was not falling into the kitchen fire in Sunbeam Terrace. "Thousands, my dear. You'll be worth your thousands. Peter, pass the marmalade to Mr. Biddicombe."

Mr. Biddicombe showed signs of choking, and his enormous wife, with an anxious eye upon the little filbert of a man, was preparing herself to start up if necessary and thump him on the back.

"Mr. Jevvers," said Mrs. Pamfrey, who was fat of face, used a violet powder, and wore her oily black hair in a tight fringe, "is also looking after the Estate. Not before it needed it! It seems to me that it wants a cleverer man than Mr. Colver to manage a gentleman like Mr. Shorder. If people knew what I know they'd say the same." She paused, spreading bloater paste on her last square of toast, and then added darkly:

"What was he beating Mr. Pedro for, the day before yesterday? Ah!"

"You don't say?" asked the enormous Mrs. Biddicombe, who was voluble with Joseph but a little taciturn at tea-parties. "Beating him! Goo' Lard, then."

"The blows of his hunting crop could be heard in the servants' hall," said Mrs. Pamfrey. "One of the housemaids counted two-and-twenty strokes, and there was more: she was too dazed to begin counting from the start. There must have been more."

"What was it all about?" asked Mrs. Chumble, stretching out her hand for Captain Duck's tea-cup. "Peter, pass the rock cakes to Mrs. Pamfrey."

"Well, we mustn't say all we know," replied Mrs. Pamfrey, breaking off a charred currant from the rock cake which Mr. Chumble had pressed upon her. "It's my belief, certainly, that Mr. Pedro knows more than the Squire would like him to know."

"I should be afraid if I was Mr. Shorder," said Mrs. Chumble, "of being murdered in my bed. I can't abide foreigners. They make me feel creepy all over. Nasty crawling dark-skinned things, they are! Peter, pass the splits to Mrs. Biddicombe."

"Why don't the Squire turn off the Spaniard?" demanded Captain Duck.

"Ah!" replied Mrs. Pamfrey; "why don't he? That's what more than one would like to know."

"If he can flog him," argued Captain Duck, taking his tea-cup from Mrs. Chumble, "I should say he could kick him out altogether. I should say he could. If you can hit a man you can usually drop him likewise overboard, as the saying is."

Mr. Biddicombe, who had been choking for five

minutes with a crumb, and had only just recovered after several thumps on the back from his faithful spouse, here contrived to ejaculate in his high piping voice that he had always heard as how the Spaniard was put over the Squire by Lady Emily, his mother, to keep him from—well, murder and madness and goings on similar.

"Well, we don't know," said Mrs. Pamfrey, who objected to a person daring to advance theories in her presence about any matter connected with the Estate. "Some of us who ought to know," she continued, "may have our opinions. We may ask ourselves what happened to the Squire when he went to Spain, at the age of two-and-twenty, and came back four-and-twenty with Mr. Pedro, who has never left him since. For my own part, I ask myself another question. I ask myself if the Squire means to marry Miss Haly. If he does, then all I can say is, look out for fireworks."

This startling statement threw Mrs. Chumble into a state of great excitement. She drew her chair nearer to the table, hastily bade Peter see that everybody had everything, and with one elbow resting on the table's edge, the fingers propping her double chin, she turned her gaze upon Mrs. Pamfrey, and begged that most interesting lady to tell them all she knew about the matter.

"Mr. Shorder is a gentleman I shall always speak well of," said Mrs. Pamfrey. "Faults he has. Faults we all have. But there's this to be said about Mr. Shorder, whatever his faults may be, it wasn't because of them that her ladyship refused to live at The Hangers."

"What was it, then?" asked Mrs. Chumble, in great excitement.

"It was because," answered Mrs. Pamfrey, "when her ladyship put him the question, Who is Pedro, and why? —he refused to give her an answer."

"Mysterious!" muttered Mrs. Chumble.

"If that man hasn't got a hold over the Squire," said Mrs. Pamfrey, with great emphasis, "well, look!—does he ever let the Squire out of his sight?—does the Squire ever go away on his yacht but what Mr. Pedro goes with him?" She paused, fixed her eyes on the purpling and plethoric face of Mrs. Biddicombe, and concluded by asking Mrs. Chumble for half a cup of tea. "I don't say more than I know," she said: "but what I do say is, that Mr. Pedro has the Squire like that!" Here Mrs. Pamfrey picked up the charred currant which she had discarded from her rock cake, and pinched it till it cracked and squashed between her thumb and forefinger.

"And you think the Squire's running after Miss Haly?" asked the hostess, returning the cup full to

overflowing.

"It's my opinion," replied Mrs. Pamfrey, taking it and slopping it, "that he'd give the Estate to marry her."

"I always thought," said Captain Duck, who was eating enormously in order to save the store-cupboard at home, and wishing that his dear little wife wouldn't only pick at the food, neglecting what he called the opportunity of pleasing the hosts and saving a supper at home at one and the same time; "I always thought that the gentleman in that quarter was a gentleman in a black coat and choker. What do you say, Mrs. C?"

Mrs. Chumble replied rather shortly that she had always known of course that Mr. Rodwell was sweet

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upon Miss Haly, but whether it was any more than that she really could not say. Mrs. Chumble greatly disliked being reminded of her housekeeper days. She spoke of that period as the time when she was "looking about her," a phrase which always widened rather grimly the elastic mouth of little Peter in the big clothes. She referred quite pleasantly to the late Mr. Banthorpe, who always looked as if he had but just emerged from a band-box; but the awkward hiatus which connected the burying of that well-dressed gentleman with the marrying of Mr. Chumble she reguarded as unsuitable to the purposes of politic conversation.

"It's wunnerful," coughed Mr. Biddicombe, beginning to choke again, "how the gentry carry on. Parson walks out with the lady, a'm told, two or dree times a week. What do it mean, to be sure?"

Here he went off into a violent choke, and, asking Mrs. Chumble to excuse her, Mrs. Biddicombe rose from her place, went round to the other side of the table, and began to thump her little filbert of a man on the back till the tears ran from his eyes and the crumb shot out of his throat.

"Talking of the parson," said Mrs. Pamfrey, when the coughing of Mr. Biddicombe had given place to a most painful wheezing, which made him look like a pullet with the gapes; "that was a dreadful thing for him with Dr. Blund. They tell me up at the vicarage he's been a different man ever since. I couldn't but notice myself last Sunday he looked as grey as a parrot and as shamed as a guilty criminal. My husband was told, by never mind who, that he don't go to bed now till one or two o'clock in the morning, and sometimes he walks about all night. It's shame

has done it. Mr. Eyre being sent for shamed him. You may depend on it he's thoroughly ashamed of himself."

"The Reverend Rodwell's all right," said Captain Duck, helping himself in a fine tolerant leisure to a bun of gigantic proportions. Every one else had ceased to eat some minutes ago, but Captain Duck was a man of duty, and, as he himself put the matter. when he was out to a party and invited to stoke up, stoke up he did. "Of course, we can all see," he said, taking a mouthful, "how it's hard work for a young man to have any argument of any nature with the devil over the deathbed of a miserable sinner. We know that. But every business has got to be learned. a preacher he's a born success. Look what he's done for the town! And he'll be all right at deathbeds when he's had a bit more of experience. You wait. There's nothing much the matter with the Reverend Rodwell."

"What an interesting thing," exclaimed Mrs. Chumble, "if the Vicar and the Squire are both in love with that Miss Haly. Though what they can see in her!"

"Yes, indeed," echoed Mrs. Pamfrey; "what they can see in her I can't imagine."

"She has a nice figure, no doubt," said Mrs. Chumble; but dressmakers are very clever in these days! As for being a lady, well, no one would ever take her for that."

"Such a flat, dead-looking face; isn't it?" asked the portly Mrs. Biddicombe, beginning to puff and blow after her tea.

"All very well in a picture like the Soul's Awakening which we have in our parlour," said Mrs. Pamfrey,

"and which my husband says always takes the steam out of his appetite; but for marriage, for a home, for the head of a tea-table, and daily use, as you may say—well, it would give me the mully-grubs."

"No wonder that companion of hers is such an invalid!" said Mrs. Chumble. "I should be the same, I'm certain, living all day with a sour gooseberry

of a girl like her."

"Now I don't agree with you ladies," said Captain Duck, swallowing the last morsel of bun, and letting his eyes go slowly round the dishes on the table, in case there should be something suggesting to him that he had a vacant corner. "I think Miss Haly has a kind face," he said, withdrawing his eyes from the dishes, and passing his hands slowly over his waist. "I think she has a good face. I don't see nothing in her face, nothing at all, which would take away my appetite."

"Yes, I think it's a very sweet face," murmured

little Mrs. Duck, rather diffidently.

"That's the word, ma!" cried Captain Duck, feeling that he had not yet completed his stoking operations, and reaching forward to take the last split on the table. "It's a sweet face. Not an astonishing face. Not a dashing face. No. A sweet face—full of sweetness it is. When I come to think of it, our Winnie has very much that kind of face. A sweet face."

Further discussion on the beauty of Beatrice was interrupted at this point by the arrival of Mr. Pamfrey. He came through the shop, rapped on the glasspanelled door, and opened it at the same moment that he pulled off his hat. As he entered the room there

entered with him a whiff of tarpaulins and a muchneeded breath of fresh air.

"Better late than never!" cried Mrs. Chumble, rising to greet him, and extending a frank hand of welcome, while her eyes vanished and her cheeks bulged. "Pleased to see you, Mr. Pamfrey."

"Same to you, ma'am," answered Mr. Pamfrey, and went swiftly round the table shaking everybody's hand, and saying rapidly, "How do, Mrs. Biddicombe?" "How do, Captain Duck?" "How do Mr. Biddicombe?" "How do, Mrs. Duck?" "How do, Mrs. Chumble?" and, arriving at his wife, he concluded with, "I think we've met before, mother," and gave her a kiss which did not appear to afford her the smallest gratification.

He was a very big man, with large bushy black whiskers, a snub nose, a heavy upper lip, and very small dull black staring eyes set deep in his head. He smiled broadly, spoke in a hushed manner, drawing in his breath rather noisily, and held himself like a ramrod.

"Peter, the kettle," said Mrs. Chumble, and set about making tea for the new arrival.

"Sorry to be so late," said Mr. Pamfrey. "I was just going to clean myself when Mr. Colver stopped me on business. Very busy just now, Mr. Colver is. Going up to London to-morrow. Seems to live there now!"

"It's since Mr. Jevvers took up the Estate," said Mrs. Pamfrey.

"I think it is, mother: I really think it is," agreed Mr. Pamfrey. "The lawyers seem to be very busy just, now. Two lumps, if you please, Mrs. Chumble; yes, ma'am, I have a sweet tooth, and I hope my lady

will tell you that I have a sweet temper! Yes, there's been a lot of coming and going of late. A lot of it, there has. Only this afternoon there was something. Something very queer it was."

"What was it, Mr. Pamfrey? Oh, do tell us," pleaded Mrs. Chumble.

"Well, we're all friends here," he said agreeably, glancing towards his wife; and then he checked a little. "Still, it doesn't do for a man in my position," he added, lifting his cup, "to say too much about anything."

"I wonder what it was!" exclaimed Mrs. Chumble to Mrs. Pamfrey.

"Something about the Estate," whispered that lady darkly.

"How aggravating of him not to tell us."

"He occupies a responsible position, you see."

"Of course he does."

At this point Mrs. Biddicombe, shifting on her chair, showed signs of returning volubility. "Lawyer Colver have been arter me these two weeks and more." she said. "He do seem to be mazed to get hold of them three little cottages of mine up to Trewithian. 'Won't you sell, Mrs. Biddicombe?' says he. 'No.' I says, 'I will not; for why should I?' 'They don't bring you in much,' he says. 'It's true they don't,' I answered, 'but I've bought 'em, and I've bought the moor rights with 'em,' I says, 'and perhaps,' I says, 'Mr. Colver, sir, that there little bit o' moor will be worth a fortune to me when I'm an old woman and can't get about with Joseph same as I do now.' You never see a man so mazed to get hold of a little bit o' property! He and that there Jevvers have been walking over the moor like a couple o' daft

souls. It's my belief there's some tin or coal or summat about that Trewithian land of mine."

Mr. Pamfrey smiled. "Well," he said, "I'm glad to hear of Mr. Colver wanting to buy anything. What I hear about most is selling. Seems to me we shan't soon have anything to sell at all."

Mrs. Pamfrey coughed warningly.

For the rest of the entertainment it was the same: whenever Mr. Pamfrey appeared to be growing interesting, a glance from his wife, or a cough, or a movement of the knife upon her plate, instantly deflected if it did not altogether dam the current of his talk. Mrs. Pamfrey, of course, was burning to know what Mr. Pamfrey had to say, and so, directly Mrs. Duck rose, saying that she must really go now and bath the babies, Mrs. Pamfrey rose too, took her departure, and left Mrs. Chumble to gossip about her with Mrs. Biddicombe.

After giving her husband a most tremendous blowing up for hinting before a lot of common people that there was anything amiss with the Estate, the good wife demanded, in rather kinder tone, as she walked home with Mr. Pamfrey, to be told what had happened in her absence.

Mr. Pamfrey replied that, in the first case, Mr. Colver had been saying that more vegetables and fruit must be sold, and that a couple of the under-gardeners must be done away with. The place, he had said, was costing a fortune, and things couldn't go on as they were. To this Mr. Pamfrey had replied that the gardens had always been conducted on the same scale for the past forty years, and he thought it would be more reasonable that outgoings should be stopped in the stables and in the kennels than in the gardens.

which were understaffed as it was, and which had always produced revenue.

Mr. Colver had said there was to be economy all round, and that Mr. Pamfrey must do what he had said. "'Very well, Mr. Colver,' I said to him," went on Mr. Pamfrey, who could be in controversy as bold as a lion when the antagonist was not his wife; "'I will speak to Mr. Shorder in the morning; I will see what can be done. But,' I said, 'if you think that the profits can be more, and at the same time the spendings less, you're making a mistake, sir, and that I tell you plain.'"

Mr. Pamfrey then related that Colver had told him not to speak to the Squire about the matter just at present, and had gone on to consult him about the selling of certain land in the neighbourhood.

"You spoke at tea, or you nearly spoke," said his wife, "about something queer happening this afternoon."

"Ah!" said Mr. Pamfrey. "That was rather a queer thing, and no mistake about it. I was going round the front gardens early this afternoon, when all of a sudden out of the stables comes the Squire, riding that big black horse of his. 'Pamfrey,' he calls, as he got alongside, 'did you see Pedro go out this morning?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Which way did he go?' 'I couldn't say, sir.' 'D—d fool!' he cries, and rides off. Ten minutes after I see him coming back; he was leaning down from his saddle and talking furious at Pedro, who was walking at his side. Pedro kept edging away from him, and he kept spurring his horse at Pedro as if he'd like to ride him down. He was using awful language. I heard him. Something about Pedro having gone to Cowey without leave.

Something about a letter. 'Play the fool with me,' cried the Squire, 'and, by —, I'll set the hounds on you!' Pedro was swearing away in his foreign language, and looking white as a ghost. "'I'll break you, you swine,' cries the Squire; 'play the fool with me, will you?' Then Pedro said something about Miss Haly, and at that the Squire drove his horse fair into him, and sent him flying. 'Go to your room!' shouts the Squire: 'I'll come to you!' Then looking up he saw me, and called me up, getting out of the saddle. 'Send him round to the stables,'he says, pulling the reins over the horse's head. And with that, holding his crop extra hard, he walks beside Master Pedro, cursing him under his breath till I felt almost frightened myself."

"Now, whatever can it be?" asked Mrs. Pamfrey at the end of this tale. "At one minute it's the Squire frightened by Pedro, and at the next it's Pedro frightened by the Squire! It's my belief they're both as bad as each other, and both know something about the other which mustn't come out or it's fireworks for both of them."

Mrs. Pamfrey paused at this point first to remark that there was that good-for-nothing young Godfrey Eyre hanging about Miss Penderwick's shop for Susie Duck, and secondly to prophesy trouble in the near future for the Duck family and the Eyre family.

"What worries me," said Mr. Pamfrey, "is Colver and this Jevvers poking their noses about the place and turning over every cabbage and every farthing. When Jevvers was here they were up at the house with the Squire day after day; lunching, dining, talking, all the time. Ah! there's something wrong. The Squire has gone the pace too hot: that's what it is.

I shouldn't be surprised if we didn't have some bankruptcy proceedings before very long up at The Hangers. Praise be to God, I've put a little away to last out our time."

Mrs. Pamfrey was silent for a few moments, and then she said: "The Squire ought to marry that girl at the Headland. She's a stupid thing to look at, but she's rolling in money. It's my belief he would like to marry her. It's my belief he's genuine fond of her. I shouldn't be surprised if she hasn't gone abroad to make him feel the loss of her. They're as artful as cats, those rich, dowdy girls are."

If Mr. and Mrs. Pamfrey were anxious about Shorder and his affairs, so too were plenty of other people. The men at the Works, who well knew that the place had been run at a loss for the past five years, wondered how long it would be before Mr. Colver shut them up altogether. Poor Philip Letheby felt the anxiety as much as anybody. In the drawing office and the manager's office. the staff openly and fully discussed the problem of no orders and an antiquated plant. Philip Letheby had only his mine to trust to, and the brief replies of Mr. Jevvers to his letters, which merely said that the solicitor would write when there was anything to communicate, did not furnish him with the stuff out of which so tentative a nature could manufacture hope. So he began to look more and more sadly at the faithful fiancée's photograph on the American organ, as he sat there at night composing Kyries which floated down to the invalid father, where he sat with his dozing wife, gazing out of the window at the wake of the moon across the sea.

The Farnaby brothers also had their fears in the matter. With the enthusiasm of Rodwell behind them

they had blossomed into the most devoted of church-wardens and the most devout sons of the Church. Their pride in their garden was shared now with their pride in the parish. Their eloquent devotion to the works of Dickens was divided now with a dumb respect for ecclesiastical history. They no longer hugged retirement. They went out at night to meetings in the Church Hall. They presided over temperance meetings. They took the chair at lectures and entertainments. They visited in the cottages. They saw that parents sent their children to Sunday School. In a word, they had become to Rodwell not only churchwardens, but curates and brothers-in-arms against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil.

It chanced on the afternoon of the very day when Mrs. Chumble gave her tea-party that these indefatigable walkers, the long brother and the short brother. the short brother with a thick stick and the long brother with a thin stick.—had gone across the moors to the market town of Cowey to do a little personal shopping. They had talked on the way of the parish, of Mrs. Blund's appointment as matron to Beatrice's Rest Home for London workers, and of one or two matters in the finances of the Church which required their attention. They had talked, too, if the truth must be told, of Dickens, reminding themselves now of Mr. F.'s aunt, now of Peggotty's work basket with its candle end for waxing thread, and now of "Shy Neighbourhoods" or of "The Calais Night Mail" in that great favourite of theirs. The Uncommercial Traveller. When once the brothers began quoting Dickens against each other, there was no stopping them. "Don't you remember." Frank would say, beginning to smile and John would smile with him, not knowing in the least what was

coming, "how the credible and unimpeachable member of the Chuzzlewit family," here he would laugh and John would laugh with him. "used to relate that his grandmother had a lantern," here he would stop for laughter and John's laughter would deepen, " of which she used to say, 'Ay, ay, this was--'," and here Frank would break down altogether for laughter, and John, laughing very cheerfully too, would finish it off. "I remember, yes; the lantern her fourth son carried on the fifth of November. Capital. Oh, very rich." "Yes, but don't you remember," Frank would begin, laughing again, "that the remark was-," and here he would break down again; and once again John. laughing quite heartily, but not out of control, would finish it off for him. "Oh, splendid, splendid; yes, I remember." So they would go on, for hours together, from one book to another, smiling and laughing, quoting whole passages word for word, repeating the dialogues, and dressing the characters so dear to them in the very clothes bestowed upon them by the master.

Arrived in the cobble streets of Cowey, the two brothers had occasion, among other arrangements of their shopping, to pay a visit to the post office. As they entered its swing door,—the bold John fixing his eyeglass rather tighter under his brow, and the nervous Frank half covering his face with his handkerchief,—they both remarked, almost at the same time, the valet of Tom Shorder bending over the counter and screwing his head sideways to watch the turning over of a small handful of letters which the post-mistress was examining with a slow scrutiny on the counter behind the grille.

"No, there's nothing for that name," she said as the brothers entered. "I don't suppose the foreign mails will be in before Thursday." Then she turned to one

of her two assistants and inquired when the letters from Spain usually arrived at Cowey.

Pedro, hearing footsteps approaching, turned his head over his shoulder. He started and straightened himself quickly when he saw the brothers. Half raising his hat to them, he turned again hurriedly to the post-mistress, told her that he would call later on, and hurried away with a vexatious frown on his face, his little protuberant hard eyes bent upon the ground.

On their return journey across the moors the brothers talked of Tom Shorder. They had a great opinion of him. They regarded his irreligion as something which an all-allowing Father would mercifully forgive on account of his many and great good qualities. They thought him a most brave man, and the tiger-killer in John's heart rose up in a most complete admiration whenever a sporting feat of Shorder's was related in his hearing. They thought him, too, a most generous man, a most liberal and charming host, a fine fellow, a good fellow, a fellow of strong character and considerable parts.

So they talked about Pedro, and they talked about The Hangers, and presently they talked about Tom Shorder and the parish.

"I'm afraid there is not only the old trouble of which we have heard," said John. "I mean, of course, the story of some Spanish jilt who came very near breaking his heart as a boy; but I fear there is pressing trouble of a newer and a less romantic nature; I'm afraid, Frank, that our good friend has pretty near outrun the constable."

[&]quot;The Works cannot possibly pay," said Frank.

[&]quot;A dead loss, my dear fellow."

[&]quot;What a disaster it would be if he closed them."

- "Frightful, my dear fellow,-frightful!"
- "The town has been going so well for the last two years."
- "It has. Rodwell has revolutionized it. I don't think, Frank, that the unfortunate affair at Blund's bedside is alone responsible for the vicar's change. A strong man, my dear fellow—and he is a strong man—would throw off a matter like that in a couple of days. I'll be shot if he wouldn't. I rather think," he continued, lowering his voice a little and swinging his stick, "that he may have heard definitely that Shorder is going to close the Works. That fellow Jevvers—I don't like Jevvers—was particularly busy with Colver while he was here. I believe he went over all the books."
 - "It would mean the ruin of the town."
- "Yes, it would indeed. The vicar's fine work would be thrown away,—thrown away, by George!"
- "Well, John, not exactly thrown away; his influence on the people's lives, wherever they went——"
- "Oh, quite; I was speaking rather of the town and the parish. The town would become deserted. Only the fishermen would be left."
 - "And poor Shorder!"
 - "Ah!"
- "There's some talk," said Frank, rather tentatively, about him and Miss Haly. That might save matters. She is very well off, of course."
- "My dear fellow," replied John, "I don't mind telling you now, although, as you will easily understand, it's rather a painful subject with me that

[&]quot;I hope," said Frank, looking down anxiously at the little elder brother, "that I haven't in any way—

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I know, of course, that at first you were—but I thought that, perhaps, you had since——"

"My dear fellow, don't distress yourself, I beg." John laughed a little sadly. "One learns to bottle up one's feelings at my time of life," he went on rather mordantly. "I was only going to say that if I had not realized from the first that our charming Miss Haly,—and she is charming: what?—there's no doubt on that head, I take it;—if I had not realized from the first that she, our adorable She, was devoted in another quarter, I might—I don't say I would—but I might, my dear fellow, have cut in and taken my chance with the best of 'em."

"The vicar, you mean?"

"Can you doubt it? It's obvious. I mean to say, my dear fellow, it's there for all the world to see. If she doesn't adore the man, I'm—well, I don't know anything about women."

If he had substituted "tigers" for "women" his phrase would have carried almost, but not quite the same, conviction to the mind of Frank; but in both cases the appeal would have been a bad one. just possible, with a tiger skin hanging in the hall of Gun Cottage, and having lived for some years in a country where gentlemen regard the killing of one of these animals as a great feat, and where the empty skins at least are pretty plentiful, that John Farnaby did know something, a very little perhaps, but still something about tigers. It is perfectly certain, on the other hand, that he knew nothing about women. He had not realized even that Miss Christabel Taylor had been setting her cap at him for months and months. He did not even know that Mrs. Dumper was one woman in a thousand.

"But why doesn't the vicar marry her?" inquired Frank. "He seems very fond of her, don't you think?"

"I believe, Frank," said John very solemnly, and working himself up, as he could do on occasion, "that you and I are witnessing a world tragedy, here in this little corner of the Creator's earth. I believe that on the cliffs of Bartown, under the stars and facing the Eternal Deep, there is being played out the tremendous drama, the tremendous drama, my dear fellow, of a beautiful woman in love with a celibate priest who loves her, body and soul!"

"Good gracious!" cried Frank.

"Exactly," said John, a little ironically. "You have expressed, my dear fellow, the comment of the world. Good gracious!"

He laughed again, and swung his stick a little bitterly. Frank sometimes was just a little obtuse.



CHAPTER XVII

IN QUEST OF THE SHEPHERD

RODWELL awoke one morning, after a night of storm, to find his room full of sunshine. The Spring had been playing great tricks with the British Islands this particular year. One day a kind wind blew through the fields and a warm sun shone on a green world; the next, with windows closed and fires piled high, a shivering and sneezing nation looked out upon a world buried in snow.

While he was dressing, standing in a patch of sunlight that came through his open window, Rodwell noticed that the sky was grey and watery, that against that sky every bud on a copper beech in his garden stood out clear and distinct, and he heard in the wind that came across the sea a note of warning. "Winter," he said, "has not yet done with us"; and as he spoke the room grew cold, the watery sunlight went out like a candle, and the trees in his garden were set in commotion by a burst of wind.

In a second, as if the branch of a tree had shaken from it a cluster of snow, there blew across his garden out of a darkening sky a fine powder of white dust. The little shower came and vanished, but the moment after, the wind rising angrily, the whole scene was

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filled of a sudden with a whirling mist of snowflakes. The curtains of his window were blown about, the casement strained and rattled at its bracket, and the door of his dressing room blew to with a bang.

The wind raved and howled and whistled, not like a lost soul. but like a hundred lost souls. It was not one shriek that came screaming through the window. and not one howl that came roaring down the chimney. but a hundred shrieks and a hundred howls blent into one discordant chorus of anguish and despair. The tiny dust of snow, which filled the whole scene. was whirled and driven in contrary directions. struck the ground and melted, it beat against the branches of trees and melted. It drove against the tower of the church, went in great clouds over the towans, danced and writhed above the headland. whisked and circled round the chimneys of the town. shot up to the sky, swooped down to the sea, staggered across the moor, rushed like a mad thing up the valley. and wheresoever it went and wheresoever it landeddancing, shivering, twisting, and whirling-it vanished on the instant as if it had never been, and gave place to other tiny flakes which burst suddenly upon the leaden world from nowhere.

As he looked out at this blinding storm of powdered snow, and saw the branches of trees tossing and whirling in the grey sky and heard the wind shrieking and shuddering from the sea, Rodwell resigned himself to the thought of another day spent in miserable introspection over his study fire. Another day of lonely thought. Another day of solitary battle.

He saw the postman, bending his head against the storm, approaching the vicarage across the field-path.



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He hoped, as he turned his back on the window and went down the stairs, that Beatrice had written to him another letter from Spain. That would help him to bear the monotony of his loneliness.

Beatrice had become much dearer to him since the discovery of his spiritual isolation. There was now no beauty for him in the thought of his denial of her love. How could he offer a sacrifice with no altar in his heart? What did his heart contain but a dreadful loneliness and a longing for human consolation? The ghost of a religion which had habited there had gone out from him. The God he had imagined to dwell there had turned to shadow. He was a man alone in the universe longing for rest and desirous of human love.

He had as yet reached no conclusion in his difficulty. Though there was no God in his heart, he believed that there was a God in the universe. Though there was no Christ in his religion, he believed that there was a religion in life. The fault lay with himself. By temperament, by character, by the force of his being and the intellectual bias of his training, the affection and the intensity of the mystics were impossible to him. He would never be conscious of the immanence of God, he would never be wholly satisfied with the revelation of Christ. But he would always know that there was a God, and he would always feel that Christ had revealed something of the mystery of life.

This was the problem of his being. Again and again he realized that he had not lost a faith, but had discovered that he never had a faith. He was not a man who had to struggle to be good. The word offered him no temptations. There was nothing

in life which had the smallest power to attract him from the hope of God. He was intellectually antipathetic to the vulgar tastes of men, and physically superior to the elemental passions of the human race. Evolution and civilization had produced in him a man whose will had the mastery over his whole being, whose thoughts were pure thoughts, whose inclinations were all refined inclinations, and the trend of whose being was towards service and usefulness. There was no battle in his heart against the world. But there was a frightful battle in his soul to break through the silence of God and discover a Christ.

He had never once gone near Simon Evre to ask in what manner Blund had received comfort. He avoided every possibility of encountering either the old minister or his wife. He shrank from any conversation which would lead to evangelical discussions concerning conversion. The deathbed of Blund had ceased to be a strong reality in his mind. A larger problem had taken possession of his thoughts. Not the death of one sinner, but the death of all sinners—was a contemplation which searched his intellect and paralyzed his imagination. A bad man might clutch the Cross at the last, but the consequences of his life would remain: he might be pardoned, but his victims would be punished. All through her history the Church had been promising and actually granting absolution to penitent sinners. Thousands of men and women since the gospel of Christianity was first preached had turned from their sins, and had become happy in their conviction of salvation. But what of their victims? If Nero had cried out to God for mercy, if for the last ten years of his life he had lived the life almost of a Christ; still there would be hundreds of men and women sinking



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into hell through the ruin that he had directly brought upon them. The murderer may repent; but his victim will never walk the earth again. The libertine may enter a monastery; but in a hospital there is a once pure girl, scarce recognizable now as human flesh, cursing God. The innumerable prisons, penitentiaries, rescue-homes, and hospitals of every nation and every tongue, are filled with the victims either of a parent's neglect or a fellow-creature's cruelty: the guilty ones may repent and die praising God with a psalm upon their lips: but surely the deepest depths of hell could not prevent the curses and the groans of their victims from drowning with irony and rage the song of their thanksgiving in heaven. It was not evil which perplexed him; it was the Consequences of Sin. It was not the love of Calvary which did not satisfy him; it was the justice of God's mercy.

He had reached, we say, no conclusion in this matter. His searching self-examination had shown him that he was not a Christian as the saints and mystics understood that term. But he was still humanitarian: to work to make men better and the world happier was still his vocation. Christ could still serve him as the great Exemplar, the Ideal of human character, the Revelation of a divine destiny for men. He recalled the lines of the poet nearest to his heart:

Quench then the altar fires of your old Gods!

Quench not the fires within!

The Church had ceased to exercise a powerful influence over his thoughts. He was no longer disposed to think that her governance had received definite or indefinite guidance from the Unseen. He regarded

her existence now as a convenient machinery for those who believed in immortality and whose vocation lay in helping men to realize the existence in the universe of a God and a heaven and a hell.

His tendency was to go on working in the parish as he had worked before. He would think less of the Church and more of humanity. When Beatrice returned he would go to her, and ask for the shelter of her heart.

His face gladdened when he got downstairs to find a letter from her. He opened it with increased pleasure because of the thickness of the packet, anticipating pages of her thought. A shadow fell across his face leaving it grey and cold as his eyes met the contents; the letter to himself was but a hasty line asking him to give with his own hands and as soon as possible a heavy enclosure to Shorder. "Please give it to him," she concluded, "when he is quite alone, and ask him to give you a word in answer."

Rodwell felt a dull anger in his heart against this man who could send Beatrice on his errands. Why had she gone so suddenly to Spain? What business was it that dragged him into Shorder's service, making him the carrier of a secret letter? It could not be that Beatrice had forgotten the devotion of her life, and had come suddenly under the evil spell of this wild and dissolute man. And yet, she had flown for him to a foreign country, and now she was writing to him on a matter so urgent and particular, that the man she loved must be made the secret messenger of her tidings. It hurt him cruelly to think that she had not trusted him with the nature of her errand.

The snow had blown away, the sun was shining, but the wind was still roaring over the earth, when

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he came out of the vicarage, and set off to deliver her letter to Shorder.

He fell in with Philip Letheby going to the Works as he entered the town. The organist was in low spirits. The mine, he said, was not going to make a fortune after all.

Jevvers had written saying that the expert had reported badly upon it, and advising Letheby and Captain Duck to let him sell for them as soon as possible.

"Will you lose money over it?" asked Rodwell.

"He says we may possibly get back what we invested," answered Letheby. "But it's not that so much. It's the disappointment."

"Yes, that is what hurts," said Rodwell, and his thoughts went to the faithful fiancée in London.

As they approached the Works they saw Shorder drive through the gates in a dog-cart. Pedro was seated at his side.

Rodwell remarked upon this; and Letheby told him that for the past week Shorder had brought Pedro to the Works every day, and had set him to work in his private office. "I believe," he said, "there was a row between them a week ago; Shorder caught him doing something he had told him not to do; and now he won't let the creature out of his sight."

"That's strange," said Rodwell.

"What puzzles me," replied Letheby, "is that everybody imagined Pedro had a hold on Shorder. Now it seems as if the boot is on the other leg."

Rodwell told Letheby that he wished to see Shorder in private, and asked the organist to secure such an interview for him. Letheby led him into the office, gave him a chair, and then went in search of Shorder.

Through a little blurred window in the waiting-room

Rodwell looked upon the Foundry with its floor of blackened sand, its travelling cranes, its steam hammers, and the humming belting of its lathes. In the gloom of the distance he could see the red glow of the furnaces, the huge studded boilers, and grey-faced men in leather aprons going to and fro carrying steel and iron. The floor of the room vibrated with the clang of hammers and the thud and panting of the engines.

As he stood there he saw Shorder emerge from a little door smoking a cigar, with Colver following behind. As they went forward into the sheds, Letheby appeared upon the scene and spoke to Shorder. The Squire paused, listened, hesitated, and then went forward again.

Letheby returned to Rodwell. "He'll come in a minute," he said. "He seems to be put out about something. Colver came down from London yesterday; they say in the office he brought bad news from Jevvers. I shouldn't be surprised if the Works closed. Nice thing that for all of us!" He smiled cheerfully and added: "I've been dreaming that the mine would keep me if the Works were closed; but the mine has gone first!"

Shorder came into the room soon after Letheby had left Rodwell reflecting on his quiet patience under adversity. Shorder's face looked hard, and he greeted Rodwell without a jest.

"I've brought you a letter from Miss Haly," said Rodwell.

Shorder looked at him quickly. "Ah!" he said, taking his cigar from his mouth; "I was rather expecting that." Rodwell handed him the letter.

"She says in her note that you will give me a word in reply," he said, moving to the window.

Shorder took the letter with a word of thanks, and walking to the end of the room opened it roughly and impatiently. As he pulled out the folded sheet something dropped from the envelope and fell towards the floor. His effort to catch it attracted Rodwell's gaze for a moment, and he saw that it was a photograph.

The letter was a long one, and Shorder took time in reading it. Rodwell stood at the window looking down into the yard.

Presently Shorder said, putting the letter and photograph into his pocket: "The answer is No."

Rodwell turned and saw that the man's face had become suddenly heavy and dark. The cheerful light of good health seemed to have gone out of his flesh; his lips were compressed and sullen; there was a darkness, almost a sadness in his eyes.

As if he saw in Rodwell's face a reflection of his own, he made an effort to be cheerful. "Not a very polite answer, eh?" he laughed. "Better say.-'No, I must keep my word,' if you can spare the ink." He put his cigar back into his mouth, and thrust his hands into the pockets of his jacket. "Well, parson," he said, setting his feet apart, "how's the parish? You've lost your best curate in Miss Halv. but she's comin' back soon, so buck up and look cheerful. What's the matter with life, while bodkins are cheap? Old Blund has got his quietus, and we shall soon take the knock ourselves. There's plenty more to take our place. The youngsters are pressin' up behind, parson! All the while, they're pressin' up behind the old fogeys!"

He laughed, squaring his shoulders and looking

down at Rodwell with an amused smile. "They tell me," he said, smiling, "that you haven't got over the peggin' out of old Blund. You ought to go away, man. Take a holiday. Why not run over to Spain, and bring the ladies back? Do you good. You'd have the fun of rescuin' Miss Christabel from the embraces of toreadors, and you'd see the beautiful country of Carmen."

Rodwell replied: "You've mentioned, quite kindly, a piece of gossip about me. May I, just as kindly, mention a piece of gossip about you? They say in the town that there's a possibility of the Works being closed. The people are living under the dread of it. Can you tell me, in confidence, if there is any truth in it?"

Shorder's face darkened. "In a little one-eved place like Bartown," he said, savagely, "there's always a darned sight more cacklin' than eggs. Close the Works! Lord A'mighty, what an awful thought! What a catastrophe! What an earthquake! You might think they were talkin' of the Books of Judgment! A little tinpot of a place like mine," he continued, angrily, "could be run on a schoolboy's pocketmoney. What the devil do they imagine? Do they think I'm broke to the world? Do they think I'm floored for a thousand pounds? A lot of cacklin' old hens! Damme, parson, they only think of one thing in Bartown. Bread and cheese! There it is. it's a bread and cheese place! You may preach to 'em of eternal heaven and eternal hell. but all the time they're thinking of their dirty little wages!"

Rodwell walked to the door. "I'm glad," he said, "that it's not true."

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"Don't contradict it," laughed Shorder. "Let 'em grow lean cacklin'. It'll do the little people good."

"That seems rather cruel," replied Rodwell, turning to face him.

Shorder laughed. "Isn't life cruel, parson?" he said. "It's my belief the human race wants to live for a few years on the same fear that the wild animals live on. These confounded friendly societies. slate clubs, goose clubs, trade unions, burial clubs, and insurance companies are playin' Old Harry with human nature. What's life to the working classes? An anxiety to keep up a d-d premium! So long as the Goose Club keeps goin' everything else can go to blazes. They're fed up with assurance. There is no risk, no danger for them, in life. Why, it pays a man to break his beastly arm, pays him! The employer of to-day is the great financier of ignorance and stupidity. The employer provides the fool who comes whinin' to him for a job with a private income for life directly that fool gets his toe under a steelhammer or shoves his silly head in the light of a crane. God bless my soul, parson, the workin'-classes want to go to bed every night for seven years not knowin' where to-morrow's breakfast is to come from."

Rodwell replied, "We should want rather stronger locks to our doors and windows!"

"What!" cried Shorder, laughing, "would the restraints of Religion and all the immortal aspirations of the soul give way to the stomach? You don't say so, parson, you don't say so! I'm shocked. Why, man, what's an enpty belly to the fear of eternal hell?"

"It's a heresy of modern days," answered Rodwell, to regard religion as a policeman."

When he got out into the windy street again, Rodwell made his way back to the vicarage, wrote a brief letter to Beatrice giving her Shorder's answer, and then sat down to pore over books of theology. He spent the morning striving to find some sort of answer to the perplexity of his soul. He had searched through every book he could think of, since that night at the bedside of Dr. Blund, but in no case had he found anything at all which supplied him with the key to his riddle.

After luncheon he returned to his task, sitting at a little table in the window with his books open before him. He rested his left elbow on the table, supported his head with the hand, and turned the pages slowly and wearily in search for light. The sun moved slowly to the west, the wind sank down, and shadows fell peacefully across the garde...

It was late in the afternoon and he was reading with slackened interest when he came upon an ancient quotation, entitled: "Colloquie of the Soul with Christ touching the Passion.' At first he read the passage with a dull tiredness: but at its conclusion he went back and read it again with sudden interest:

"Lord, wherefore diddest Thou suffer Thyself to be sold?

That I might deliver thee from servitude

Wherefore diddest Thou sweat blood?

To wash away the spots of thy sin

Why wouldest Thou be bound? To loose the bands of thy sins.



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Why wert Thou denied of Peter?

To confess thee before my Father

Why wouldest Thou be accused? To absolve thee.

Why wouldest thou be spitted on? To wipe away Thy foulness.

Why wouldest Thou be whipped? That thou mightest be free from stripes.

Why wouldest Thou be lifted up upon the cross? That thou mightest be lifted up to heaven

Why were thine arms stretched out? To imbrace thee, O fainting Soul.

Why was Thy side opened? To receive thee in.

Why diddest Thou die amidst two thieves?"
That thou mightest live in the midst of angels."

The words left an inexpressible fragrance in his heart. He received into his soul as he read them some deep and beautiful inflowing of tenderness. They answered no riddles. They rolled away no stones. They cleared away no clouds from the darkened sun. But he was conscious, as he went slowly down this antique Colloquie, of some gradual and gracious accession of peace to his mind. He felt quieted. There came to him a feeling of security, a quiet assurance that to his riddle there was an answer, a deep and placid restfulness as though he had been invited by the Man of

Sorrows to sit down and rest with Him a little while in a green place.

He guessed dimly that if he had been a man repenting of some dreadful sin and struggling to lead a higher life, the simple words would have meant infinitely more to him. He felt that then he might have thrown himself down, crying out with the man of old, God be merciful to me, a sinner! But even to him, a man whose nature was averse from sin and whose struggle was not with his passions, not with his unbelief, but with his inability to apprehend the Reality of Christ, though he sought it earnestly and with tears, even to him the words breathed hope and consolation.

"Why were Thine arms stretched out?
To imbrace thee, O fainting soul."

"Lord," he said in his heart, almost with reproach, "I have come to Thee, but Thou hast not embraced me."

In a moment the terrible thought came to him that even as there were those who would not come to Christ, so also were there those to whom Christ would not come. The idea appalled him. At first he was stunned by it. Afterwards he tried to evade it. At last he faced it and thought it out. The literature of art and religion, he confessed to himself, was full of the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep; where was the agony of the sheep seeking its Shepherd? Familiar was the reproach, "How is it that ye have no faith?" True also was the exceeding bitter cry, "Lord, how is it that I have no faith?" Sin, he felt, played too large a part in the represented drama of life. The story of man was not a struggle to shake off evil;



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it was a fumbling, in silence and darkness, to find God. There was more than sin. Yes: there was the agony and the bitter sorrow of the pure soul clamouring to be heard and owned of God. The sin of man must be admitted. The impenetrable silence of God must also be confessed. He was not selfrighteous: in the gentleness and the broad nobility of his nature there was no room for the Pharisee; but he recognized, without attributing virtue or merit to himself, that he was not a person subject to human passion, that he was not a person tempted to deal cruelly or unjustly with his fellow-men, and that his heart was a stranger to baseness, vileness, and all the perverted lusts and appetites of the bestial world. Faults of character he had, but he was not evil. He could say, with his poet, that he was of those :--

> ... milder natures and more free Whom an unblamed serenity Hath freed from passions and the state Of struggle these necessitate.

He was more than not evil. He was definitely disposed towards good. The tendency of his character was towards righteousness. The tone of his disposition was entirely religious. To work for the purposes of God, to forget himself and labour to make human hearts and human homes the happier and the better for his existence—this was the movement and the aim of all his faculties. But, when he turned to the heavens and cried out with his fainting soul for the embrace of the Christ, when he hungered and thirsted for a personal conviction of the Reality of Christ, he was conscious only of one thing—isolation.

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At the first deathbed of a frightened soul he had learned that he was Christless. Into his heart the Master had put no words. He had gone from that deathbed discerning himself to be merely an enthusiast, of the company of believers who only "believe that they believe."

In prayers and in heart-searchings since that day, he had discovered more clearly that he was Christless. The mind of the Master was not his. His attitude towards sin was not the attitude of the Master. He did not know how the Founder of Christianity would have answered the problems presented to Christianity by the modern world. He knew what theologians said, he knew what the Church said; he did not know what the Master would say.

And when he called, the Master was silent.

He lifted his face from the book, and found his eyes dazed by the great glory of the setting sun. It stood directly opposite his window, far away across the sea, hanging in multitudinous splendour just above the throbbing silver line of the horizon, and throwing out over the broad face of the water a shining and transplendent path of light which dazzled the sea and softened shore and sky.

The green wall of the cliff in this twinkling primrose light shone like fine velvet, the roofs of the fishermen's cottages by the harbour gleamed like steel in firelight, the tumbled hummocks of sand in the towans, standing up like a range of mountains, burnt like pure gold.

He was gazing through the window, half-dazzled by the glory and the splendour of the sun, when, in the midst of that radiant light he discerned a tired and, as it seemed, a sorrowful figure moving slowly towards him through the quiet garden. He was



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tempted for a moment to think he had seen a vision: and watched the figure as we watch the mysterious forms which come to us in dreams. Then his eyes became used to the light and he perceived that it was Simon Eyre. He closed his books hastily, drew back from the window, and stood in the centre of the room, waiting.

T.V.

CHAPTER XVIII

SIMON EYRE'S TWO ROADS ACROSS THE WORLD

THE entrance of Simon Eyre restored Rodwell to himself. He went forward, greeted the kind old man with a smiling welcome, and led him as an honoured guest to a chair by the hearth.

When the door was closed, Rodwell said to him affectionately: "It is very good of you to come to me. I ought to have sought you."

The tall and bent old minister, who appeared to be tired by his climb up the hill, rested for a few moments before replying. He sat stooping a little forward, with his hands on his knees, his eyes cast down. The natural pallor of his lined and troubled face was flushed by exercise. His thick grey hair fell across his brow, and, as he sat breathing a little heavily, from time to time he put it wearily to one side with a hand that trembled. The face, with its high and rugged brow, its luminous sad eyes deeply set, and its brief beard and moustache of stubborn grizzled hair, was like the face of Carlyle. It had something of the weariness which we associate with Ulysses, something of the capacity for suffering which we associate with Job; it was the worn face of an old Highland shepherd or a deep-sea fisherman. It was a counten-

ance which looked as if it had been ravaged by the seas and buffeted by the winds.

Rodwell, who sat with his back to the windows, was struck by the rough beauty of the old man's countenance; touched and irradiated as it was by the softened tenderness of the sunset which shone like fire upon the frames of pictures and the panels of the door. He saw in it more than he had seen before: not the rapture of tranquillity which breathed from the face of the minister's wife, but the more human expression of rest after many journeyings, and peace after long conflict.

"I should like to hear," said Rodwell, leaning forward and speaking in a tone of close friendship, "how you succeeded where I failed."

"Ay," said the old man slowly, raising his eyes, we must talk of that too."

"I thought you had come for that purpose."

"No," replied the minister, letting his gaze fall again; "I did not come to talk of the dead, but of the living. Still, it's a great subject, that subject of the dead. We will talk of that too." He did not say that he and his wife had waited day by day for Rodwell to come and ask about the death of Dr. Blund.

Rodwell waited for him to speak, watching the working of the lined and troubled face, and studying the distress which now became manifest in the tired eyes.

"The dying man," said Simon Eyre, slowly, raising his eyes, "got right in the end, because he was beaten to the ground and saw he could not help himself. Ay, that's the turning point! Out of the depths; out of the slough of despond. Some men must be

brought there; beaten to their knees; made to bite the dust. It isn't the prosperous man who says, 'I will arise and go to my Father'."

He sighed slowly and deeply; with his crossed hands resting in his lap, and looking past Rodwell, he let his gaze watch sadly the sinking of the sun as though something he loved was going from the earth.

- "I found him in great fear," said Rodwell; "that is what you mean?"
- "Fear's a great thing," replied the old preacher, rousing himself; "but the fear that counts is not the fear of ignorance; it's the fear of knowledge. He feared the invisible because he was uncertain of it. It was my work, by the grace of God, to deepen his fear by making him certain of it."
 - "You increased his fear?" asked Rodwell.
 - "Ay, till his heart broke!" replied Simon Eyre. "How did you do that?"

The old minister straightened himself and brought his gaze from the sunset to the face of Rodwell.

"There's no Saviour, Mr. Rodwell," he said, very slowly, "unless there's a hell."

Rodwell saw in a moment what had taken place at the deathbed of Blund. This old sad-faced man with the tired eyes and the rugged brow had bent over the cowering body of the sensualist and had turned fear into terror with the frightful menace of eternal hell. Personality had told there. Rodwell might have hinted of punishment, might even have threatened with hell, but the soul would have kept its way; Simon Eyre, rugged and real, had but to fix his eyes upon the dying man and speak of punishment to fill the baffled soul with terror and alarm.

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"I am not disputing with you," said Rodwell, remembering that Godfrey Eyre worshipped at church and not at chapel, "but I put it to you that the man was frightened to God?"

"Not quite that," said Simon Eyre; "he was by fear able to realize God. That's a different matter. And when realization came, fear went from him."

"He was happy?"

"Happy because he was secure."

"You mean that he was saved?"

"Ay, the man's soul was saved."

"Now," said Rodwell," "if you will let me, I will dispute with you. Not that I wish to set up ideas of my own, but because I desire to arrive at the truth of a problem. I am as anxious for truth as poor Blund was for release from fear." He got up, and leaning against the mantelpiece, looked down at Simon Eyre. The one man was a typical representative of charm, culture and refinement; the other a rough and timeworn figure of a disappearing seriousness. "Let us suppose," said Rodwell, as the light drew gradually from the room; "let us suppose, as I have reason to believe is the case, that this man left behind him on earth men and women, once happy and good, whose present misery and wickedness are due absolutely and directly to action of his. Suppose that their sufferings go on increasing, suppose that they die bitterly, without the least motion towards repentance; wellare they to bear all the consequences of his sin, while he goes forward with thanksgiving in a state of bliss? Is that a thinkable proposition? Does it, I mean, satisfy our sense of justice?"

"I said just now," replied Simon Eyre, "that there's no Saviour unless there's a hell. I say now, there's

no God unless there's a Saviour. Take away a Saviour, and you take away human thought of God. But there is a Saviour; and no man, it matters not how bad he may be, can turn to that Saviour, without finding peace, without finding satisfaction, without finding an answer to all his perplexities. Because. turning to Him, he faces towards God. That's the point; he's facing right. The path behind him may be strewn with the wreck and ruin of a godless life; but, look, if his eyes are set towards righteousness. must not the Sun of Righteousness brighten his face? You ask me, is it thinkable, does it satisfy our sense of justice? Well, I answer by asking you a question, If Christ was lifted up to draw all men unto Him, is it thinkable, would it satisfy our sense of justice, if the worst of men turning truly and earnestly to the Cross, in sore need and terrible peril, found himself disowned and condemned?"

"Still there are the victims. The people he tempted and ruined."

For a moment the old man was silent, then, very sorrowfully, bowing his head upon his breast and sighing deeply, he said quietly: "I believe that no man is tempted more than he can bear."

It seemed to Rodwell that the words were wrung from him, and that he was striving to convince himself that they were true.

"In any case," said the old man, lifting his head, and fixing his gaze upon Rodwell; "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? That's where we rest." He paused, and then, in a new voice, speaking with an even equanimity, he proceeded as follows: "I have reached certainty in my religious beliefs by being very honest and clear with myself about the

295 meaning of those two words—heaven and hell. tell you what I understand by them. To me, Mr. Rodwell, it is certain that there are two opposing forces at work in the world of men. One force is Selfishness, the other force is Self-Denial. These two forces have made across the world two great roads. the one road leading to hell, the other to heaven. Every man that ever lived has travelled upon one of those roads. Every grave that has ever been dug is filled with the dust either of Selfishness or Self-Denial. No subtlety can make more roads across the world than those two. Either a man, in the totality of his character, is selfish or he is unselfish. Along the selfish road may journey the rich man who throws as he travels bags of gold to the poor, or, now and then, even stops himself to bind up their wounds. like manner, along the road of self-denial may travel the kind man who now and then sits down by the roadside weary of helping others and mindful only of his own comfort. It does not matter. The thing that counts in each case is the positive and general tendency of the life. If a man's face is towards selfishness, it matters not how many good deeds he may do as he goes, he will arrive at hell. If a man's face is towards self-denial, it matters not how often he may weary or turn in upon himself, he will arrive at heaven. Hell, then, is absorption in self and consequent severance from God. Heaven, then, is absorption in Christ, whose whole life and gospel is the life of Self-Denial, and consequent union with God. That is what I mean by those two words, heaven and

"Well, I agree," said Rodwell. "But, the man of whom we have been speaking particularly, walked

hell."

all his life upon the road of selfishness. Is it possible that through fear at the last moment he should get upon the other road and save his soul alive?"

"Suppose," replied Simon Eyre, "a man set out from Edinburgh for John o' Groats and walked with his face towards Land's End. On his way people warned him that he was going in a wrong direction. but he was self-willed, thought he knew best, and would not heed them. So he goes on, not thinking of the goal at all, but lost in the pleasure and delights of the road. Suddenly, when he is too broken and footsore to take pleasure any longer in these passing things, he perceives that it is a matter of life and death to him to reach John o' Groats, and he begins to be anxious whether, after all, he is going in the right direction. In the midst of his confusion, there comes one who convinces him of his mistake, namely Death. Frightened by the spectre, and eager to amend his mistake, he turns round and sees on what an ill and foolish road he has been going all his life. He is terrified. he is full of fear. To go back by himself over that dreadful path, now abhorrent to him, is impossible. He stands in abject misery looking now forward to a false goal, and now backward over a foolish route. What shall he do? To get to his true goal in his own strength is now impossible. At last he realizes the need of a Guide, and cries out for help. The Guide comes to him, and in His coming the man is saved. Yes. he is saved, because the Guide knows the way. The man is saved, he is converted, he has turned round. he is facing in the right direction; but, mark! he still stands where he is. He is not at his goal. no; he is where his life has brought him. He has got to go back all the long way. What he has sown

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that he must also reap. With weakened energies and dim vision, he has got to get back to the place whence he started and then, after that, travel, and who shall say how painfully, forward again to the true goal."

"That is a good allegory," said Rodwell, who had listened with great interest, watching the sunlight die gradually away from the old man's careworn face

Simon Eyre half shrugged his shoulders as if no words could ever express the tremendous reality of man's conflict with Principalities and Powers.

"I do not think," he said, "that we preach enough how Christ said of Himself 'I am the Way'; never, never, 'I am the Goal'. Av, there's many a sermon there! The penitent who dies in a state of salvation does not go into the Presence of the Most High, where alone there is peace: but he goes into the next world facing towards the Kingdom. That's something, but it isn't satisfaction. Ay, he is saved; but hard and difficult will be the pilgrimage there, as it is for the best of us here. Yet, not so hard and not so difficult as the dark and terrible road before those mad ones who live as if there were no God, who use their lives as if there were no Author of Existence, and whose lusts and appetites mock, as they go in riot by the Cross of Self-Denial, the crucified form of the Sinless Christ. There are two roads across the world, but they lead to many heavens and many hells."

Rodwell was greatly struck by the stern reality with which the worn old man clothed the phrases and symbols of the devout life. He recognized, too, that to this grey and way worn traveller, who preached to a handful of people and whose own son had found no peace from his teaching, Christ was no mythical ideal, but a tremendous and essential Reality.

The problems which the minister had discussed interested Rodwell, and he derived instruction from the manner of their treatment. But the urgent problem of all had not been stated. Rodwell, under the spell of the old man's fervour and reality, was almost moved to ask him for light upon this his own most dark and difficult problem,—"Why was Christ not insistent and real to him?"

But as he cast about in his mind how he should begin, Simon Eyre lifted his face, and spoke again.

"We must talk about these things again," he said slowly. "It is growing late, and I have not yet told my errand. Mr. Rodwell, sit down a minute and bear with me. What I have to say concerns the living and not the dead. It concerns not the things of the spirit, but the things of the body. I doubt but it will hurt me to tell you."

The sun had set, and the room was filled with the gloom and the chill of twilight. Rodwell was about to light the candles, when he checked himself, realizing that the old man would better prefer to speak out of the shadow the things that hurt him to say.

"You have helped me, Mr. Eyre," said Rodwell, affectionately; "let me, if I can, be of service to you. What is it? Do not let it hurt you to say anything to me."

Rodwell saw a hand go through the gloom to the shadowed face, and move slowly and falteringly across the bent brow. "You were speaking a moment since, said the old preacher, "of the victims of a man's sin.

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That came home to me, Mr. Rodwell; you little guessed how much. Ay, with good reason!"

"I am so sorry to have pained you," said Rodwell.

"Nay, for I came to talk on that matter," replied Simon Eyre. "I came to ask a fellow-servant of the same Master as I serve, to help me to save a sinner and his victim from worldly ruin."

"All I can do I will most gladly do," said Rodwell.

The preacher's head was bowed upon his breast; his voice came to Rodwell out of the deepening gloom like a voice from the world of spirits, like a voice struggling from the spirit world to speak to mortal ears. "My boy, my son," he said, "has dishonoured a poor child, has brought a poor girl to the edge of ruin. He repents. While there is yet time he would save his victim. The gates of Mercy are not closed upon him. He can save her; he will save her. But there is the world to be faced. There is life to be got through. He can save her by an act. That act he will most surely perform. But after, there must needs be bread, bread for the twain. It's that I've come to beg for."

Rodwell was humbled by this story. How often he had gratulated himself upon his power over young Godfrey Eyre. How often in the case of that boy he had compared the suasion of his own religion with the repulsion of the father's religion. But a moment ago he had thought how his teaching had saved where the old preacher's had failed. And now, not only had his religion failed to save after all, but in the bitterness and sorrow of repentance the boy had not come to him, he had gone to the stern father.

"This story pains me," said Rodwell, "almost as much as it must pain you."

"Ay, you have been kind and good to my boy," said Simon Eyre. "But for you he might have gone with more momentum on the bad road. You checked him, where I had failed. His mother and I owe you a great gratitude, Mr. Rodwell. We never cease to remember it. And now I come to ask you for another service. The boy must get work. Can you help us there? If we could find him something to do, perhaps in the Works, he would undertake with less despair the duties and responsibilities he has incurred by his sin. For his sake, and for the poor child's sake—you know her, Mr. Rodwell, and you and Miss Haly have both been kind to her—help him if you can."

"And for your sake, too," said Rodwell, getting up, as the old man rose. "God help us all," he concluded, when he had promised to see Shorder and to engage the interest of other people; "the best of us, Mr. Eyre, can never tell when the hour of temptation will come. Your boy is a good boy; his sin is the sin of youth, and our social laws have some responsibility in the matter."

"Ah!" cried the old man, interrupting him, and shaking his head in warning; "conditions, circumstances, are nothing. The thing is the sin itself. Nay, I have not spared the boy there. The sin was his act. I do not think there is in the modern world a more dangerous disposition than the spirit which seeks to make light of, or to find excuses for, sin. Sin means severance from the Sinless One, and that is hell. Sin is the most terrible thing on earth. Mr. Rodwell, if an old man may venture to give you a rede, it is this: preach the horror of sin and the

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reality of hell. It's the most difficult task, but it's the most righteous task, to make men realize the horror of sin and the punishment of hell."

"Better still," said Rodwell, taking his arm as they walked to the door, "and surely, harder still, to make men feel the reality of Christ."

"There is no reality there," replied the preacher, as they parted in the garden, "until sin is known to be what it is, and the damnation of estrangement from God has become the most certain conviction of a man's life."

For the next few days Rodwell busied himself with the tragedy of the minister's son. He saw Tom Shorder, and after suffering much banter, secured for Godfrey Eyre a modest employment in the Works. He saw Godfrey, who was sullen in his penitence with the self-consciousness of youth, and ready to call himself hard names while he abused life with a rather wild disgust. Rodwell could not bring himself to see Susie. His fine nature shrank from such an experience, and he blamed himself for it, and in his shrinking realized again his inefficiency in the Master's service.

He found Captain Duck unshaken by the catastrophe.

"I thank God," said the cheerful old father, blowing his nose more often than was his wont, and apparently troubled for the first time with watery eyes, "that it's no worse than it is. The lad's done wrong, but he stands by it; my little girl, for all she's tripped, will make him a good wife; she's got summat of her Ma's genius for economy; and she's a home-bird; and so, all's well that ends well. Scandal in a family is not a pleasant thing, Mr. Rodwell, specially in a family of nine. But, sir, speaking from experience, it's not

a many family in these parts that hasn't got dirty linings to their fine coats. Ah, my word!"

Rodwell inquired after the health of Mrs. Duck, and the Captain, slowly rubbing water from his eyes, smiled victoriously: "Ma's bearing it just as you might expect. She's figured out to a farthing the cost of the wedding-breakfast; she's promised all the children that they shall stir Susie's wedding-cake, just as if it were a Christmas pudding; and now, blow me tight, Mr. Rodwell, if she isn't helping Susie day and night with the little lass's trousseau! Tell you what Mr. Rodwell," he added in a whisper, nodding his head a great many times, "when it comes to philosophy a man isn't in it with a woman. Not in it, sir. Far from it."

In the same manner Captain Duck bore the disappointment of the mine. "That knowing lawyer of Miss Haly's," he said, "has just managed to get us our money back, mine and Mr. Letheby's, and now that we know we might have lost it altogether, why, it seems like a little fortune to us."

Just as Rodwell was going, the Captain inquired in a rather awed voice, if he had heard about his nextdoor neighbour, Stringer, Captain Stringer.

"Haven't you, though?" cried Captain Duck, very glad to have the opportunity of telling a tale. "Oh, my eye! It's a serious thing, that is. Yes, and no mistake about it. The Jury! That's what has done it, Mr. Rodwell—the Jury. Done old Stringer up altogether. There was a trial for murder; it appears, a young fellow married to a loose wife took a hammer to her and finished her off. Old Stringer felt cantankerous with the prisoner's counsel, and got flattered because the Judge, so he says, kept looking at him all



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the time of the summing-up, which was dead against the man. Well, the Jury, you must understand, wanted to bring it in homicide or a recommendation for mercy, some such thing as that. But old Stringer, remembering how the Judge had fixed him with his eye as the most intelligent man in the box, wouldn't have it. 'No,' says he, 'the man might have divorced her, or he might have put a stick about her; but he hadn't no right, as his Lordship sensibly remarked, to do her in. Murder's murder,' he says; 'and the Constitution of the country orders us to hang the man who does it.' And he went on like that, hackling and heagling as you can imagine, till he fairly carried the Jury with him."

Captain Duck paused a moment "When he come home. those three old crows of his, who spend their days making black clothes and reading murders and suicides in the newspaper get round him piping out, 'Did you condemn the poor young husband? O don't say, Thomas, that you condemned him?' you must understand they were dead against the poor murdered woman as a downright bad lot. Stringer was mighty proud to appear hard and strong-minded before his sisters. 'Certainly we condemned him!' he said. 'Pooh-pooh! Parcel of women! Interfering with the laws of the country! Sentiment! Pooh-pooh! Get along with you! Where's your logic! Where's your reason!' You can fancy how he'd play the terrible fine fellow before those three old crows of his. But the more he talked, the more they wept and moaned, and went on any how. They kept on saying, 'O how dreadful to think of him in his cell! Poor young man! Married to a good-fornothing wicked woman! O how awful to think of the

poor fellow trying to sleep! Only three Sundays to live! And he'll sit all by himself in the Chapel on Sundays! Think of his thoughts! All alone in his cell! O, I shall never sleep for thinking that our Thomas has had to do with it!' And so they went on, all the evening, all the next day, and every day after. Well, you know, it got on old Stringer's nerves. It really did. He actually sat down the other day and wrote a letter as big as a Christmas Number to the Judge, arguing that the man ought to be let off after all. And, now, they say, he can't sleep a wink at night. They say he can't abide a word of Hackle and Heagle. They say he's fair crazy over it He sits all day, very white and shaky, groaning in spirit, and saying, 'Poor fellow, poor fellow; the Lord have mercy on his soul!""

"I'll step in and see him," said Rodwell.

"Better not," continued Captain Duck. "You see; well, I was just going to tell you. It's the most wonderful part of all. Yesterday afternoon. Maria, the extra ugly one of the three crows, starts off, running down the street as if she was going for the doctor. Half-an-hour after, back she comes; and who do you think was with her? Why, old Mr. Simon Evre! He staved an hour and fifteen minutes by my watch. Think of that! Yes, and this morning he was in there again. It looks, it does indeed, as if the atheist was finding himself out. Well, better late than never There's more lasting stuff in a page of Job than there is in all the Hackles and Heagles that ever lost their wits insulting the Creator with arguments about mud and so forth. I've not much patience with atheists sneaking into heaven at the last moment, but I shan't raise no objection to old



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Stringer. Ha! What a time I'll have of it, in the Better Land, asking him after the health of Mr. Hackle and inquiring whether Mr. Heagle is writing any more books just now. Oyes; I'll have some quiet and reverent fun with the old chap; that is if he ever does get where I humbly hope me and ma and our nine are going."

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CHAPTER XIX

THE WAY OF PEACE

In the desperation of ruin, men, who have gone heavily under the apprehension of its coming, are said to experience a reckless pleasure; recovering their courage and recapturing their high spirits in the actual falling of the fortunes they have raised with the painful industry of a whole lifetime. The coward, too, who feels his body emptied of force and control as the bugle sounds for the gathering of battle, is said to find a rapture and a delightsome carelessness in the charge which carries him to certain death.

It was some such psychological change which occurred to Rodwell when he brought himself to see and admit in its tull reality the miscalculation of his life. In first perceiving that he had never possessed the faith necessary to his vocation, and that he had followed all his life a delusion, and had nursed in his heart only a shadow, he had experienced a black and an awful despair. In struggling to give substance to the shadow in his heart, despair had deepened and he had suffered a slow agony. But now, when he saw with clear and steady eyes that by disposition and force of character it was impossible for him to possess with the reality of the mystics and the earnestness of so simple a soul as Simon Eyre, the sense of a Personal Christ; and when,

in consequence of this final and conclusive revelation, he forbore any longer to struggle and contend; there entered into his heart a kind of wild peace and a kind of glad resignation which freed him from all oppression.

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For a few weeks longer, he told himself, he would fulfil his duties. He would play the part of ethicist and point people to the highest example of human perfection. The prayers of the Church and the great services of the Church would not be a mockery in his For other people there was a Christ. never doubted that. For other people there was the sense of a personal Christ; and in his own heart he knew that Christ was the highest and most beautiful revelation of the Divine. He had not lost a faith: if anything, he saw more clearly than he had ever vet seen, the happiness of possessing this sense of the Real Presence of Christ. He envied those who possessed it. His grief was not the grief of a lost faith; it was the grief of a conviction that faith to him could never have the reality necessary to a preacher and a consoler of religion. For a few weeks, therefore, he could. without violence to his conscience, discharge the kind and beautiful duties of a parish priest.

In his determination to lay aside his work he experienced a feeling of relief. He was not quite clear what he would do, but in laying down his work he would at least lose the irksome reflection of his mind that he was doing that which he was not fitted to do, and that which, in consequence of his desire to do thoroughly and deeply, irked him to do imperfectly. He would at any rate be a free man.

So, as he waited for the return of Beatrice, he went more joyfully about the streets of the town, going in

among the houses of the poor with a new humanity and a close relationship of sympathy, cheering them in their troubles, encouraging them in their ghostly and bodily struggles, and bringing into their humble lives the fresh and vigorous assistance of a natural and human friendship.

Mr. Pilkin noticed the change in him, and said that he had always known it would come. "Young parsons," he said, to his son, who was making a coffin, "always start off as if the Judgment Day was only put off till they had preached their next sarmin. Ah! It's a bitter lesson to some of them when they learn as how the A'mighty isn't to be hurried or flurried by a parcel o' curates. Give this here Rodwell another ten years and he'll make quite a decent sort of a fellow."

As for the two indefatigable churchwardens, they rejoiced in their quiet and unobtrusive fashion to see their vicar growing stronger and happier with the

approach of summer.

"Wherever I go," said John, "people speak well of him. I never knew such a popular person. Popular is hardly the word. Beloved, is what I should have said. They really love him, rich and poor, all alike. If only we had run across a few padres like him in Injia, Frank! What a difference, my dear fellow, that would have made to our characters."

No man was more liked on the golf links, no guest at a dinner table was more popular, no visitor was more welcome. The spell of his personality told in directions where such a personality as that of Simon Eyre could not reach. The mining students were restrained in their excesses by the refinement and culture of his mind. His presence at a table prevented conversa-

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tion from running into frivolous tittle-tattle. He brought out the best in people, not by preaching and not by rebuke, but by his natural power of interesting men and women in matters of a high and noble character. He was not in the least prim or superior; his manner was agreeable, his conversation was bright and humorous, the charm of his face was the charm of a kind and pleasant nature. In the life of the town he was an energy making for culture and refinement. The former popularity of the rough and reckless Shorder, gave place now to an admiration, almost an affection, for the brilliant, modest and refined young clergyman. It was a case of a whole parish being proud of its priest.

Shorder had come to take a kinder view of Rodwell. He bantered the parson, and had not surrendered his old attitude of an amused contempt for other-world-liness, superstition and the effeminacy of religion; but towards Rodwell himself, towards the man Rodwell as apart from the parish priest, he presented now a more friendly and tolerant view.

Rodwell was conscious of this increasing popularity, and it was because he realized it so fully that he made a discovery of the first importance to his peace of mind. One day in the midst of the serenity which had lately come to him, he realized that in no small measure the town depended upon him for its continuance in cleanliving and self-respect.

It struck him with fear, suddenly and as something new in his speculations, that if he gave up his work, as his conscience bade him, the town would go back to its old spiritual torpor and its physical degradation.

This was a fresh problem. If he were dishonest, and continued to preach a Christ of Whom he himself

had no knowledge, the life of the little town would move steadily forward to greater goodness and a more substantial refinement. If he were honest, and taught no longer what he did not understand, the town would almost certainly go back with a rush to all the horror of its old degradation.

He recognized, in his deplored Christless condition of heart and mind how entirely his own personality had been responsible for the work of regeneration. He could never have given the people a Christ, because he himself did not possess One. He must always have given them himself.

It was a terrible responsibility which now lay upon him. To be honest with himself and to lay down his work would be like playing traitor to the town he had learned to love and had helped to raise. Not to be honest with himself was to be faithful to the town at the cost of his own peace and self-respect.

He saw clearly that another man coming to succeed him, however great his faith, might by some error of taste and manner, some small but powerful twist of personality, undo all the good work of the past, and throw the town back to its old depravity. Simon Eyre, for instance—a man whose faith was like the faith of St. Augustine or St. Jerome—even a man with so great a faith as this, had failed through a long number of years, to shake the town from its moral stupor and its physical abandonment.

Even while this thought came to him, it was of Simon Eyre he first thought in his dilemma. If he asked counsel of anybody it would be of the old minister who had failed to touch the life of the town, failed even to keep his own son in the faith and security of his religion.



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It was a day or two before he could bring himself to speak about this matter. There was both attraction and repulsion in the idea of discussing it with the dissenting minister. The man appealed to him and he had affection for him: but there was an intellectual gulf between them. Perhaps that same unnameable something which prevented his realization of the Personal Christ prevented him also from unburdening his mind to the humble minister.

But Rodwell forced himself to go. It was as if he detected in himself some miserable religious pride in this unwillingness to ask counsel of the dissenter, and so punished himself for this sin by forcing himself to go.

He found perhaps with relief, that Simon Evre was away from the house. He hesitated for a moment and then went in to rest for a few minutes with the minister's wife.

She was sitting in a high-backed arm chair beside the fireplace with knitting needles and worsted in her lap. On the black wool mat, close to her footstool, a cat lay curled up in sleep. The little room suggested quiet and regularity, rather than comfort or taste. The heavy furniture of polished mahogany, the thick black and red carpet, the maroon curtains, the wool mats on the sideboard with their flower-pots, and the large family Bible, Wesley's Journal and Pilgrim's Progress on the table in the window, all these things suggested retirement from the world and freedom from all the ambitions and vanities of life.

They talked first of Captain Stringer, to whom Simon Eyre had gone; and then they talked intimately of Godfrey Eyre, whose marriage was to take place in a few days. The gratitude of the mother for what he had done in the interest of her son, touched Rodwell's heart and drew her nearer to him.

"But it is not only my boy," she said, smiling at him, "your life has been a blessing to the whole town."

He looked at her, rested his gaze upon the unfathomable serenity of her countenance and smiled sadly, shaking his head. "Mrs. Eyre," he said, "I wish you would tell me exactly what you think of me. I can trust your vision. Come, now, my friend; this little brief popularity, what is it worth? My work—how deep does it go? Don't be afraid of wounding my feelings. Tell me what you think."

"Your popularity, my friend," she replied, smiling into his eyes, "is due to a gift which is almost next to genius: it is due to charm of character, which is as surely a talent as any of the gifts of intellect. I think well of your popularity because it is the homage paid by men and women to a gift. It is a tribute offered by humanity, whether they discern it or not, to something which transcends human will."

He had not before regarded the magic of personal charm as something which came, with responsibility, from outside. He had thought of manner as he had thought of facial expression. It was there, even as the features were there: it was something which belonged to the machinery of the body, to regard it as a gift to be grateful for and as something to be employed for divine ends, had not occurred to him.

"You have the faculty," he smiled, "of making every one think well of himself. You put us in the best light, arrange our little gifts and talents so that they may show to admiration, and then, bringing to us the mirror of your own kind mind, you say, 'There!—Look how fine and beautiful you are!'"

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"You said you could trust my vision," she answered, lifting a finger and smiling in reproof.

"I will trust it," he replied, "even if you flatter me

out of my senses."

"Now I am to tell you what I see in your work?"

" Yes."

"What is the end and object of your work?" she asked, quietly, watching his face.

"To make people, I suppose, a little better and a

little happier."

"Then," she exclaimed, smiling again, "see how you have succeeded! Since you came here the town is better, far better, and happier, far happier You have succeeded, my friend; and so I see in your work—success."

She sat back in her chair, smiling into his face, and as he regarded her he knew that she was waiting to lead him into deeper ways.

"What do you want to say to me?" he asked.

She leaned forward to him. "I want you to tell me that you are not satisfied."

"Well, I tell you so."

"There is something more than making people better and happier?"

"For those who have the faculty."

"For Him Who alone has the power."

Rodwell lifted his hand. "Now, let me tell you my thought about that," he said quietly and gravely. "When I said there is something more than making people better and happier, and added, for those who have the faculty, I meant that for those people who have the faculty of convincing men and women of the Reality of Christ there is a work infinitely greater than the work which has fallen to my hands. But,

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my friend, if personality is a gift and a talent, how much greater and how much rarer is the faculty of which I speak—the faculty of making people vividly aware of Christ's Reality. Do you realize, I wonder if you do, that a man may go in search of the Good Shepherd all his days, and never find Him?"

"In search of the Good Shepherd!" she exclaimed,

reproachfully.

"And never find Him. Yes, my friend; that is a fact of human experience which we have got to face. We have heard too much of the lost sheep; too little of the deaf Shepherd. Men do cry to the heavens, and the heavens are silent. Men do ask, and receive nothing. They do knock, and the door is not opened to them. Now, solve me this riddle. Why is it that some men, though they labour and strive with all the energy of their being to possess themselves of a living Christ, are left with only a thin and impalpable faith in their hearts?"

So very much in earnest was he, that she could see in his face and detect in his voice the certainty of his conviction that she would be able to say nothing to solve his difficult riddle. She kept her eyes upon his face, till the energy which came with his question had faded away from it, and the mind was in a condition to receive another view.

"It is because they do labour and do strive," she said, quietly. "Goodness, my friend, is to be laboured and striven after. He is only to be received."

"To you those words mean a life's experience," he answered. "To me they have no meaning. What does it mean, 'received'? If not through prayer and longing, how received? Dear lady, I am not disputing; I am stating a position. When I said

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laboured and striven after, I meant desired with a great longing. Unless through such a longing He is received, I do not see how He is to be received at all."

"Have you longed greatly?" she asked.

He paused for a moment. "Very greatly," he replied.

She studied his face for a long time. "My friend," she asked, quietly, "are you quite sure He has not come?" Then she held up a finger. "Think, before you answer!"

He smiled sadly. "Why, dear friend," he said reproachfully, "that is my great trouble. I would give all I possess to feel that one possession."

"And you are still without it?"

After a pause, he said: "Absolutely without it."

She saw that he had made his great confession. "I owe you much for what you have already done," she said. "You have been a most faithful friend and a strong helper to my boy. I owe you much for that. But I owe you much more now. You have shown me your heart."

"A heart," he said, "without an altar."

"I have never known before," she said quietly, "one who has longed greatly and has not been satisfied. It has always been my experience that it is weakness of longing which strengthens self to resist surrender. Are you sure, are you quite sure, that your longing has been for Him, and in His own way? I mean, you may perhaps have set your longing in the direction of some such institution as the Church, a noble and a most beautiful direction, but not the direction followed by the saints."

"No," Rodwell corrected; "not there. At one

time, yes; for the greater part of my life perhaps; but not of late. No, all my longing has been direct to Him. It was the discovery of my want, when I found that I possessed a Church but not a Master, that set me longing in the right direction."

"Then, has the longing been in His way? tell you what I think that way is? I mean, that the sense of a Personal and Real Christ can only come to those who have emptied themselves of self. Presence is near all those who love Him, near even to those who do not acknowledge Him and vet work in His direction: but that sense of great Reality, which you desire, is only felt by those who have no thought but His. That is why loyalty and devotion to any one church or any one creed is so dangerous. That is why the Prophets were so stern with idolatry. must be nothing between the soul and God. I think. no, my friend. I am quite sure, that He is nearer to you than you can yet discern. I think your eyes are not vet able to see Him because you are not looking entirely in His direction. Long for Him you may, but it must be with a longing which has sacrificed every thought of self. There must be in the heart, I mean, not only hunger and thirst, but a surrender, absolute and complete, of the intellect and will. How shall I say it? The realization of Christ which you desire—the highest and most perfect happiness of the religious life, the consummation of all human existence,—only comes with the other realization that of ourselves we can do nothing."

Unconsciously she had laid her hand upon the secret of his life.

"There again," he said quietly, "you use a phrase full of meaning to yourself, full of meaning to the saints

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who have used it all down the ages, but alas, meaningless to me. You say that of ourselves we can do nothing. Is not that only true, in the same sense that of ourselves we could not make and sustain ourselves? I mean, can we not of ourselves do useful and Christlike service to our fellow-creatures? Indeed, you force me to put to you a question which is causing me great anxiety, a question entirely personal to myself. Let me put it to you in the confidence of friendship and as one, not arguing, but asking counsel."

He told her very briefly, clearly and succinctly, not sparing himself and yet speaking without any emotion, his position as it related to Bartown. When he spoke to her of his desire to give up his work she exclaimed and shook her head, smiling; but for this, she listened in silence as he stated his difficulty.

When he had made an end, her first words were a confident declaration that he would continue his work

"Do you recollect," she asked him, "that when you were here before, I begged you to bear in mind, whether you had failed with Dr. Blund or not, that behind your work always was the Master?"

"Yes," he answered, "I remember."

"My husband," she went on, slowly, "has failed to attract men to worship; still, behind his work is the Master. You have succeeded where he has failed, and though you do not yet recognize it, behind your work is the Master too. Yes, listen to me. My friend, you think that your success is due entirely to your own efforts, to a certain magnetism or force of your personality. You think it is your art, your literature, your refinement, which have done so much

to make this town better. And so, discovering that it is this, and not the Master, your sense of honour tells you that you must no longer work in His Name, since He is not real to you. Well, I think this discovery is destined to reveal to you the great blessing you seek and desire. With all modesty and with all self-effacement, honesty forces you to confess that the success of your work is due entirely to your own intellect and force of character. Now, let me ask you two questions. My friend, would you of yourself have consecrated all your days and all the hours of your days to helping make people better and happier; would you, I mean, have found in yourself any good and logical reason for sacrificing your life in the interest of others?"

"Only a common humanity, perhaps."

"But so great a sacrifice of yourself, your whole life?"

"I have always felt, dimly, some call, some vocation in the work. I mean I should have had no desire to make people happier and better unless I could have seen in it a divine fruition."

She smiled and nodded to him. "The Master was there, I think. Dimly seen perhaps, or scarcely apprehended, but still there. He was there in your consciousness dwelling in the shadowy conviction that it is good for a man to lay down his life for his friends. But let me try and show you by my second question how completely He is with you, how entirely He is in your work." She leant forward, smiling and gracious, and studied his face. "Suppose," she said, "you gave up working in His Name, but continued working in your own: would your success be as great?"

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He answered quickly: "No: I shouldn't like to think so."

"Suppose," she continued quietly, "that you called the people together, and told them that Christ was not real to you, but that refinement and literature and art, and goodness and hope of immortality, were real to you; and so you invited them to come and hear you speak about these things. Suppose you did that."

"I see what you mean."

"But do you see? I want to show you that your strength and your power and your charm are only what they are because they are made sacred by His service, and because they have behind them—if not in your own heart, in the hearts of the people—something which you of yourself could never possess, the attraction of Jesus. Your personality would always count; but what gives it victory in the hearts of men and women is the fragrance which it carries into people's hearts from the character of Jesus. See yourself in this light. See your whole life and work in this light. By yourself you are little more than a man who pleases; in His service you are a man who draws people to God."

"In a dim way," he said, "but I fear only for the moment, I begin to see light."

"Presently," she said, very quietly, "you will see the Light of the World. The realization you so much desire will come to you in the realization of how little you can do in your own name and by your own power. It may come to you in your work, as you go on, day by day, labouring to make others happier and better. Each time a heavy heart is made lighter by a word from your lips, remind yourself that it is not you who are speaking but your Master. Each time a worn and sorrowful face brightens at your coming, remind yourself that it is not you they see but your Master. In you, though you do not recognize it, the poor and the suffering behold the hope and promise of Christ." She paused, and regarded him with tender earnestness. "There is a message to you, my friend, of the most real and comfortable meaning, in those eternal words: 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.'"

She spoke the words slowly and softly. They came to him with an entirely new significance. He said them over in his heart, and felt in himself something, as it were, break down and fall away. No vision appeared, no sacred Form, luminous and beautiful, passed before his gaze. He heard no voice. He caught no strain of music. But if he experienced none of the ethereal and transcendent joys of the mystic and the saint, yet could their joy be hardly deeper than his, as he lost for a brief moment, suddenly and yet naturally, the pressing and insistent reality of personal consciousness.

Now he saw what she had meant by her counsel that he should neither strive nor labour after the divine Realization, but receive. Labour meant consciousness of self. Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you! He had been asking and seeking, labouring and striving; wearying himself by much searching to find out his Christ; and all the while it seemed Christ had been very near to Him, hidden only behind the veil of his restless self-consciousness. Now he understood what was meant by a man's losing his life to find it. To lose all sense of self was to enter into the Kingdom. Denial of riches and power and glory, denial

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of the whole world, this was good but it was easy;

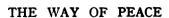
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the hardest but the best, the last to come but the most catholic and embracing of all, was the denial of self. To be born again was to deny every faculty and motion of self and to find all things in the Man of Sorrows. enter the Kingdom was to come out from self. To possess a Christ was to dispossess the will.

As he pondered in this manner on the fulness and the happiness of surrender, she spoke to him again, more softly and more tenderly, as though knew her voice was passing now direct to his entranced spirit: "One who has been known among many nations, if only for a little time, as the Redeemer of the World, must stand for ever in a position apart from all others to those who love God. Think what He must be Who is called Light of the World! It is the love of Christ which has lighted the world: dogmas about Him have only lighted the fires of tyranny and disputation. It is the Person, the Character of Christ which has overcome the world. The surrender of ourselves to a formula or a tradition is of no avail: the surrender must be made direct and only to the Heart of Christ. There is only one invitation, Come unto Me. There is only one satisfaction, I will give you Rest. No man knows what is meant by the love of Christ until he falls down in worship and adoration of Him alone."

She ceased speaking, and after a little he rose and went over to her. Slowly she put out both her hands, and he took them and held them, looking down on her face which was raised to him in inauiry.

"You have been kind to me," he said. "I think I understand the meaning of words I must T.V.



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use, even if I never experience their happiness in myself."

"The most beautiful dawns," she answered, "are the slowest in their coming."

CHAPTER XX A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

ON the memorable day that was to bring Beatrice back to Bartown, the sun burned for the first time that year with incredible heat. Mrs. Biddicombe, coming over the hill in her spring-cart, again and again had to cease talking to the uncommunicative and lethargic Joseph, in order that she might lift a corner of her white apron and rub it vigorously across the damp circle of her shining purple face.

And if the sun scorched Mrs. Biddicombe on the white hill road, much more did it scorch Bartown in the valley. At three o'clock in the afternoon, but for the smoke drifting out from the tall stack of Shorder's Works, it might have been a town of the dead. Not a dog was to be seen in the roads, nay, not even an urchin flattening his nose against the glass pane of Mr. Martin's sweet-shop. The asphalte pavement lay spongy and smelling of tar; the road hurt the eyes as one looked at it; it seemed that the slate roofs would dissolve and melt into the quivering air; glass-windows and the stone of the sills were hot to the touch; and the paint on unshadowed doors pumped up into little globular blisters like drops of wooden perspiration.

The Miss Colvers found it a fatigue even to arrange

flowers in the drawing-room for their Mamma's At Home, although one or two promising young gentlemen had been particularly invited. Mr. Shorder, in his office, worked in his shirt-sleeves and bade Pedro do the same. Mrs. Chumble repeatedly opened the glass-panelled door of her parlour to tell Peter Chumble that if he could not stop the tarpaulins from smelling so abominably he must take and fumigate them. Captain Duck, with his waistcoat loosened, was clucking and making entertaining grimaces to the youngest of his nine, who jumped and bumped on his patient knee, tearing at his face in the agonies of teething; Mrs. Duck, in the bedroom, was putting the last touches to Susie's trousseau. Mr. Vick, it is important to remember, was lying full length on a bench in the deserted billiard-room of the Angel, fast asleep. As for Rodwell who had been entertaining John and Frank Farnaby to luncheon, he looked at the clock and remarked that sun or no sun, they must go down to the station and welcome Beatrice and Christabel.

So it came about that when the thing happened, and when all the town lay still and silent and the only other living things to be seen moving on the hot and burning earth were Mrs. Biddicombe and Joseph in the far distance, the old lady wiping her face with the corner of her white apron, and Joseph taking the smallest steps imaginable; it came about, we say, that Rodwell, with a Farnaby on either side of him, was on the crest of the field overlooking the town.

Rodwell was thinking of Beatrice, and longing to see the dusty London train come swinging round the corner. He had determined to tell her everything, and to be guided by her decision. Mrs. Eyre had given him comfort, had shewn him glimpses of the

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light; but he was still conscious in his own mind of unreality. But he had faith, if he had not comprehension. He would tell Beatrice how it was with him. Either he would go or stay. She should decide.

Little John Farnaby was wearing the huge solar topee with a voluminous cotton puggaree of dark blue which always made its appearance with the least excuse from the summer heavens. He looked every inch a slayer of tigers as he strode at Rodwell's side swinging his thick stick. Frank Farnaby, less audacious and more self-conscious, was wearing his ordinary billycock; but he carried, as John had insisted upon it, a sun umbrella of brown holland with a dark green lining.

John was comparing English heat with Indian heat, and making the acute observation that in India people dress for the heat whereas in England they do not; when suddenly upon the still air there burst the most tremendous and clamorous roar, like the deep booming sound of cannon fired immediately in front of them, and the three men found themselves driven backward so that they staggered and almost fell.

The first to recover himself was John Farnaby. He ran forward a step or two, pointing excitedly with his stick. "Great God!" he cried, in an awful voice. "look at that!"

In a cloud of smoke and volleying stones, they saw the tall stack of Shorder's Works, two hundred feet high, whirling rapidly and falling through the air. At the same instant they saw the roof of the building shooting upward to the sky, writhing and twisting like a tortured thing, in the midst of steam, smoke, and burning coals.

The three men stood on the crest of the hill trans-

fixed with horror. A shattering noise told them that the stack had fallen. A cloud of dust burst upward from the earth, dogs were heard barking furiously; and as the smoke and steam cleared away from the sky, they saw the roof crash downward through the air.

Then they realized what had happened. One of the big boilers had exploded; the roof of the building had been blown into the air, and the great stack had fallen on the ruins.

"There won't be a man left alive!" cried John, starting to run down the hill. Rodwell swept past him. "As quick as you can," he said, breathlessly. John, even in the midst of his excitement, did not forget his solicitude for Frank. "You mustn't hurry," he cried over his shoulder; "it's suicide for you; too soon after tiffin"; and away he went as hard as his little legs could carry him down the hill after the parson.

But Frank did run, and was there almost as soon as John.

When Rodwell reached the town he found himself in the midst of a distracted mob. Over pavements powdered with shivered glass from the broken windows, ran a tumult of people, calling, shouting, and screaming as they went. Some of the women were only partially dressed. Dogs were barking like mad things. A horse that had taken fright came charging round the square with its empty tumbril swinging behind it.

The sight that met Rodwell's gaze was terrible. Either through a defective safety-valve or a weak plate, the largest Lancashire boiler at the Works, immediately under the tall shaft, had exploded—driving out solidly its two ends for a distance, in the one case, of four hundred yards and in the other of

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one hundred and fifty yards. In the farthest case, the massive missile of steel had plunged through the timber of the Works and had gone hurtling to the river doing but little damage; in the other case, the vast circular shield had crashed through the lower floor of the offices, plunged across the street, and smashed into the *Angel*, driving in the wall and bringing the roof sheer over like a soldier's cap.

The square was like some hideous scrap-heap. Masses of masonry, chips and arrows of slate, twisted bars of iron, segments and spokes of wheels, rags of timber, and shreds of turnery, littered the whole ground. In the trampled dust one could see such common objects as brass door handles, window hasps, and fragments of office furniture. The Works themselves were all but a heap of ruins. Here and there stood a fragment of shattered wall, with a piece of corrugated iron flapping from the top of it, and the frame of a window hanging helpless, like an empty sleeve, from the side. Here and there stood a stone buttress and an iron girder, even one of the engines with a piece of belting swinging in the air. The roof, which had been blown sky-high and was riddled with holes where pieces of boiler plate had been driven clean through it, lay like a cloth over part of the wreckage. For the rest, it was a ghastly and disordered heap of steel and iron and wood and stone, with steam oozing from it, dust blowing across it, flames spirting up from it, and, for those who had eyes to see, rats running over it in panic terror.

From every street in the town people came rushing to the scene of disaster. Women plunged shouting and screaming into the ruins, calling to their husbands and sons, and tearing up wood and iron with bleeding hands. Men formed themselves into bands for putting out the flames and restraining the wild rescue work of the women. Rodwell was swept off his feet and carried in the screaming mass of people to the scene of disaster. Fishermen and tradesmen were struggling with miners and labourers to reach the place, and do something, they hardly knew what. The air was filled with the screams of women and the shouts of the men. It was impossible to restrain the panic. Advice was drowned in the babel of voices, and all effort at order was frustrated by a frantic sense of overwhelming terror.

The first victim of the disaster seen by Rodwell was Shorder himself. The giant, in his shirt-sleeves, appeared suddenly from the wreckage with a frightful purple bruise across his face and dark blood running out of his hair. Rodwell saw a gold chain round his neck, and a locket hanging over his shoulder. He stumbled and reeled like a drunken man, waving his arms and groping with his hands. A fisherman caught him and tried to support him out of the ruins, but Shorder pushed him away. "Keep these fools back," he gasped, tripping over a bar of steel. Then he caught sight of Rodwell. "Keep 'em back!" he cried, and sank down with his head in his hands.

Rodwell, with John Farnaby to help him, got a number of men to form up and drive the people back. They made a line and advanced against the women pressing them from the ruin. Rodwell mounted a pile of fallen stones and waved the crowd back with his hands, shouting to them that it was the only chance of saving life. The sight of the clergyman standing there seemed to restore confidence. "You will be needed," he cried; "every woman will be needed to

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attend to the wounded as we bring them out. Make preparations. Every minute's precious." At this moment, as if Providence had designed it, the horn of Dr. Simpson's motor-car was heard at the back of the square. "Here's the doctor," cried the people turning round, and they made way for him to enter the square. They became instantly calm and rational. "Here's the doctor," they kept saying to themselves; "it's all right now. The doctor's here. Make room for the doctor." The clamour died away, and the women and children stood in a dense mass watching Dr.

Simpson and the men at the work of rescue.

Shorder stumbled to his feet, and went back into the ruins. Wounded men were now to be seen emerging from the wreckage, some of them supporting their comrades, others working quietly at rescue. As their wives saw them they cheered and waved to them. Rodwell found many a dead man, and left the poor bodies lying there till the living had been saved. He discovered Philip Letheby pinned down under a mass of masonry, perfectly conscious and calm. "I'm done for now," he said; "both legs; no more organplaying; you may as well let me lie." Rodwell moved the granite from the poor fellow, and called to some one for help. Shorder went past him with a dead man in his arms, and did not stop or look. Rodwell saw that the dead man was Pedro Almeida.

Some one else came to Rodwell, a tall woman whom he recognized as Mrs. Vick. "Can I help you?" she asked, and bent down over Philip Letheby. "I want to move him," said Rodwell; "but first I want the doctor." She went away, and he watched her for a moment, interested to see her so close and to hear her voice for the first time.

She came back presently with Dr. Simpson, and Philip Letheby was placed on a shutter and carried into the square. Rodwell was following, when a voice called him. He turned about. A young tradesman was beckoning to him from the rear of the ruin. Rodwell stumbled over the débris, and made his way to the place. "Young Mr. Eyre," said the tradesman, meeting him; "he's smashed to pieces." The horror of this disaster struck Rodwell instantly. Susie would be ruined. Great Heaven, what would be the effects of this terrible disaster! He bent over the ghastly figure of Godfrey Eyre and saw that there was no hope of his recovery. "Run for Dr. Simpson," he said to the tradesman, and knelt down at Godfrey's side. "Susie!" gasped the poor fellow, in his agony; "too late!-too late!" "No," replied Rodwell: "it's not too late; keep a stout heart; we'll do our best for you." He turned and saw Mrs. Vick close at hand. "Go quickly," he said to her, "and inquire in the square for the daughter of Captain Duck. Susie Duck: bring her here without delay." Then he turned to comfort the mangled boy, and wait for Dr. Simpson. All around him men were groaning in their agony, and the rescuers were stumbling over the wreckage. well saw John Farnaby in his shirt-sleeves working like The voice of Shorder, loud and clear, ten men. came to him above the din. He was giving orders. "The Angel's a wreck," he called; "take them to the Church Hall. Where's the parson? Tell the parson he's wanted." Rodwell was seen, and Shorder came floundering to him, his face almost covered with "You're wanted in the Church Hall," he said to Rodwell; "the dying want you; as quick as you can." Before Rodwell could make reply, the

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giant staggered on to lift more wounded from the wreckage and carry them in his arms to succour.

Mrs. Vick came back with Captain Duck and Susie. The news of Godfrey Eyre's terrible plight had got wind, and a way had been made through the square for old Simon and his wife. They reached the place just as Rodwell had made the pale and trembling Susie kneel by Godfrey's side and was beginning to rehearse what he remembered of the marriage service. Mrs. Eyre went to the other side of the fallen boy, and knelt down, holding one of his hands. Simon stood behind Rodwell, with his eyes closed, praying. Captain Duck was supporting Godfrey's head.

When it came to the plighting of troth, Rodwell looked up quickly and asked for a ring; Mrs. Vick drew off her wedding-ring the only one upon her fingers, and was about to hand it to Rodwell when she checked. "Is there not another?" she asked. "Yes, there is his mother's," answered Mrs. Eyre, and passed her worn ring to Rodwell. Rodwell stooped close over Godfrey. "Can you hear me?" he whispered. "Yes," came the answer with a groan of anguish. "Try and say after me," said Rodwell, "these words;" and he repeated the words of troth.

"Susie!" cried the boy, as the words ended, and Rodwell began to pray; "kiss me, and say you forgive me." The poor broken and weeping girl kissed the bruised face of her husband, and gave him her forgiveness and took his fault upon her, just as Rodwell said:

"God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favour look upon you; and so fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that

ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting."

On the last word, Godfrey Eyre died, and Captain Duck laid the boy's head gently down, and rose slowly to take Susie's hand.

Rodwell hurried away to the Church Hall, his soul sobered and stunned by the havoc and desolation of human life. He found the place filled with the wounded. the dying, and the dead. Some of the men were asking for the Last Sacrament, most of them were pleading for Rodwell to come to them, and a few of them were cursing in their agony. Frank Farnaby had procured Bread and Wine, and Rodwell consecrated them—the one upon a plate, the other in a china cup, and went to the dying with consolation. As he pronounced the words, there came to him the voice of Dr. Simpson issuing sharp orders to women who were acting as nurses. In his nostrils was the strong smell of chloroform, and in his ears the sound of shuffling feet as the bearers brought more moaning and dving men into the hall. The place was filled with the noise of weeping and groaning and of sharp and terrible cries as the surgeon operated. The voice of Rodwell sounded steadily through the clamour. He prayed as he had never yet prayed. He uttered consolation with an energy of conviction new to him. Confessions of sin were gasped into his ear, and he granted absolution in the name of his Master, certain of mercy. Many a man twisted with agony grew calm as Rodwell's arms encircled him, and the strong low voice prayed with him to "Our Father." Here and there a man told the doctor not to mind him: he was happy thinking of God with the parson at his side. It seemed to Rodwell that the mercy of God

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was, in comparison with the sins of these poor men, as the whole ocean is to a speck of rain. He was carried away by the moment's need of a saying God, an absolutely powerful and living God, and with extraordinary fervour he swept the thoughts of dving men away from their own sins to the contemplation of the tender compassion of their Father. He went from one to the other, threading his way through the weeping relatives and the busy nurses, kneeling at the ear of a man even while the doctor was at work upon the mangled body. He strove to silence the curses of the passionate and fiery-tempered men. "Keep your God, and give us morphia!" some of them groaned with an oath. He pleaded with them, and in one or two cases brought patience where before had been only mutiny and wrath. "Pray to God," he kept saying; "think only of Him; don't think any more of yourselves; pray to Him."

The bravest man in the room was Dr. Simpson, working single-handed, where a dozen surgeons had not been too many. Mrs. Blund was his chief assistant, and no woman worked with a greater energy or a more capable discretion.

Once as Rodwell passed her, she laid her hand upon his arm. "If only Dr. Blund had been alive!" she exclaimed, and he saw she had convinced herself that so great a call to work would have saved the doctor.

Mrs. Vick came suddenly to Rodwell. "My husband is dying," she said quietly, "would you come to him?" He followed her across the hall. Richard Vick had just been brought in from the wreckage of the Angel. He lay horribly mutilated on the floor close to the door. Rodwell knelt at his side.

"Would you like me to pray with you?" he asked.

"Please yourself," Vick answered, between his set teeth.

"Have you asked your wife's forgiveness?"

"Not I. Why should I?"

Mrs. Vick stooped down to Rodwell. "There is nothing to forgive," she said.

"If you do not wish to ask your wife's forgiveness," said Rodwell, solemnly; "at least pray and beseech God for His mercy."

"That's nothing to me," groaned Vick.

"You stand in great peril."

"I'll stick it out."

"Your soul is going into eternity."

"I doubt it."

"I implore you," said Rodwell, "to think seriously and solemnly of your situation. In a few minutes you will be beyond the reach of human help or human pity. In a few minutes you will be alone, on the other side of death. If you persist in dying without God, your plight, I warn you, will be a terrible one. There is a hell for those who deny God. Courage and bravado will not help you. There will be no one there for you to act before. Either you will be by yourself, or with your God. Don't play the fool with your soul, man. Think of God. Think of Eternity. Think of Hell."

The dying man showed his set teeth in a ghastly smile. "I'll give my poor degraded friend, old Joe Blund, your kind regards," he said. "Go and pray for someone else. I'll look after myself."

In vain did Rodwell warn. The dying man laughed and mocked at him. "I'm not afraid," he said. "I'm not one of that sort. God's nothing to me. He never was, and He never will be. D—— my soul

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I've seen plenty of men die. It's nothing to cry about."

Rodwell prayed, and as he prayed Vick laughed and mocked at him. Suddenly the face of the dying man grew serious, and he looked at his wife. "Come here," he called, and she kneeled nearer to him. "I've given you a hell of a time of it," he said; "but it'll be all right soon; you'll be free of D.V., and a good riddance o' bad rubbish. Won't you be glad?"

"Pray," she whispered to him. "Pray."

"Not I!" he answered. "Take away this parson, and let me die without laughing."

He was seized with intolerable agonies, and writhing on the ground struck out and hit unintentionally at his wife, causing her to fall backwards. It was his last blow, and he brought blood. He cursed and groaned, writhing in torture, and when the paroxysm of agony passed, he was only half-conscious. "I'm dying," he muttered, "a good riddance!—it's easy now!—it's just sailing out on a smooth sea!—Ah! Ah! "At the last exclamation, which had been accompanied by a heaving and tightening of his whole frame, so that his body was like an arch, he collapsed with a sudden shudder, and lay limp and still and lifeless, a body without a soul.

When Rodwell rose he found John Farnaby waiting to call him outside. A man at his last gasp, and too mangled to be moved, was asking for him in the ruins.

He was glad of the excuse to be out in the air and sunlight, and hurried to the door with Farnaby. As he entered the square he saw Beatrice standing there with Shorder, and looking down with him at the dead body of Pedro Almeida.

"Miss Haly is back, then," he said.

"She has been working here for half an hour," gasped John, who was almost in a state of collapse. "We've nearly finished now. Seventy-five deaths, they say. Horrible! Appalling!"

Rodwell went to the man who had sent for him, heard his confession, and stayed with him till he died. When he rose from his knees twilight was falling on the scene.

He made his way back to the square, and found that Shorder and Beatrice had both gone. Round the Church Hall there was a large and silent crowd, waiting for news of their relatives. Several doctors, surgeons, and nurses had arrived from the hospital at Cowey, and no one was now admitted to the hall. Every now and then the door opened and a litter was brought out bearing either a man well enough to be moved to his house or a dead body. At each opening of the doors, the crowd swayed forward a little, and sometimes there was a cry or a scream as the watchers recognized their dead.

In the square Rodwell came upon Frank Farnaby assisting John to get a wounded man into Mrs. Dumper's donkey cart, Frank had been acting as charioteer all the afternoon, driving the victims very carefully and tenderly to their homes.

"Poppy has earned her oats to-day," said John proudly, screwing his eyeglass tighter under his brow. He had laid aside his helmet and was still working in his shirt-sleeves; he was running with perspiration.

Frank went to the donkey's head and walked forward, coaxing Poppy to move.

"He's working like a lion!" panted John, and turned again to the hall.

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"Miss Haly has gone home?" inquired Rodwell. John stopped. "There's something up," he said, lowering his voice. "Something about Jevvers. Shorder and Miss Haly and Colver have been talking. Shorder telegraphed to Jevvers a couple of hours ago. My dear Rodwell, I fear that this is a crushing blow to our friend Shorder. Not a man insured. Not a brick or piece of machinery insured. Liability! It means ruin."

"Where are they now?"

"Shorder has gone home. He's frightfully knocked about the head and arms. Pedro is dead. They've taken his body to The Hangers. One of seventy-five! Was there ever such ruin and disaster! Like a bolt from the blue. Glorious summer weather a few hours ago; and now this!" The little dormouse shuddered.

"And Miss Haly, where is she?"

"She went to the Eyres. That poor daughter of Captain Duck is there."

Rodwell was called away to a cottage, and when afterwards he inquired at the Eyre's Beatrice had returned to the Headland.

It was midnight before he came out from the Church Hall and made his way back to the vicarage.

CHAPTER XXI

. 4

MR. JEVVERS ARRIVES FROM LONDON

If there had not been grief and anguish of the most poignant kind to keep sleep from the pillows of the people of Bartown, the great heat of the night would have been itself almost sufficient. Not a breath of air came through the shattered windowpanes. The waves drew back from the shore in a soundless refluence. Not a leaf stirred on the trees. The only sounds heard in the stifling hush of the night was the howling of dogs and the ceaseless sawing and hammering of Pilkin and his son making coffins.

Rodwell in vain longed for the sleep which would fit him for the stern work of the morrow. He compared this intense, just, perfectly unselfish and vain longing for sleep, with his righteous and fruitless longing for the reality of a Personal Christ. He remembered what Mrs. Eyre had said to him, that the very intensity of his longing might defeat its end; and remembering this, he endeavoured to compose the pacing thoughts of his brain and prepare himself to receive, not to compel, the inestimable gift of sleep.

It was in vain. So in like manner he had striven



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quietly to receive that other gift also in vain. His brain worked against his will. He was like a man striving to control a runaway engine with a brake that refused to bite. He saw clearly, as he lay through the silent hours with the moonlight on his bed, that the thoughts of the brain are separate and distinct from the conscious will of the soul. Strive as he might he could not prevent his brain from thinking. Strive as he might to dissociate himself from his thoughts, they struck upon his consciousness and called him back from the gradual swoon of sleep.

His thoughts carried him back to the frightful catastrophe which had overtaken the town. He went over the scene in which he had so lately been moving. He recalled the passionate earnestness with which in the stress and heat of the moment he had assured the dying of Christ's infinite mercy. He recalled, too, the confessions which had been gasped into his ear.

His brain, cooler and calmer now, demanded of him whether he did truly believe in the forgiveness of sin. He was conscious that the passion and the fervour of his consolation had gone out from him. He was no longer the burning disciple of Divine tolerance. He was cold and critical. He could review without the tragic strain the scenes through which he had moved. And as he went over them, he marvelled at himself and could not explain his surrender to emotion.

What was clear to him now was the horror and degradation of human life. He perceived, from the confessions to which he had listened, that under the cloak of respectability the heart of the town was still horribly vile and dreadfully base. He had plumed

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himself on his work; he had thought himself indispensable to the moral development of this little town; now he knew that he had done nothing. The souls that had gone into eternity had issued from bodies unworthy of their place in time, and some of them corrupt with evil of a most horrible kind. He shuddered as he thought of certain children who would come on the following Sunday to his Bible Class.

No; he had not revealed God to the town. The people knew nothing of Eternity, Responsibility, God. He had given them the idea of Respectability. He had made them not heirs of eternal life, but hypocrites.

It was wonderful to him that men could live thus basely in the sight of Almighty God. There were homes in this town worse than anything in the animal world. Men who had gone to their work and walked about the streets like responsible and self-respecting citizens were now known to him as monsters of iniquity, the servants of some overmastering lust. Drunkenness, lasciviousness, lying, stealing, cruelty, and an utter disregard of parental responsibility—these were some of the sins which flourished frightfully under the concealment of respectability. It seemed to Rodwell that he had failed to convince a single person whose life he had touched with the sense of humanity's tremendous responsibility to God.

His last conscious thought before he dropped into fitful sleep concerned the future. He would, by God's grace, repair the shattered fortunes of the town, and build up a new people worthy of their immortal destiny. He would preach to men and women the awful doctrine of responsibility. He would rouse them by the fear of immortal penalties to a sense of



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their duties. He might never possess the sense of a Real Christ, but he believed in Eternity, he believed in Law, he believed in a Just God, and out of this faith he would forge a gospel terrible to the doers of iniquity.

In the morning, but little refreshed by his sleep, he hastened to the town and found the streets crowded with people, who instantly surrounded him. Their problem, though they watered it with the tears of grief, was one of money. Mr. Colver, they told him, had been interviewed, and had replied that for the present he could do nothing. What were they to do? They had no money wherewith to bury their dead and feed their children. Even the unpaid wages of the wounded and the dead were not to be obtained. What were they to do?

Rodwell inquired if they were really so destitute, and learned that in most cases they were penniless.

It was not the time or the place for a lesson on thrift; he told them that he would see what could be done, and that in the meantime they might go to the tradesmen for necessaries in his name.

He saw that he must consult immediately with Beatrice. His soul was shocked by this fresh evidence of the people's utter disregard of responsibility. Their right to beer had gone before their duty to their children. He thought of the absurd imitations of fashion with which the women bedecked themselves on Sunday and realized now that these poor follies so trivial to the eye were in effect deadly sins against the children. These people were living without any sense of the universe. The public house to the men, and the fashions of millinery to the women, were more

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than the great Universe and the Spirit of God. They talked of their rights; they were unconscious of their responsibility.

As he was leaving the people Frank Farnaby came suddenly round the corner of the square, running breathlessly and with the gravest anxiety on his face. "Have you seen Simpson anywhere?" he asked, with a gasp, "John is frightfully ill; he caught a violent chill last night; he was delirious when I left him."

Rodwell expressed his great sympathy, and said that he had seen Dr. Simpson enter the Lethebys' cottage as he came over the hill to the town. Frank Farnaby gasped his thanks, and ran off again.

Rodwell was on the road through the sand towans, beginning the ascent to the Headland, when he heard himself hailed from behind, and turning round encountered Shorder riding his old grey. The giant wore a bandage over his head and looked drawn and haggard. His voice had lost its ring of cheerful recklessness.

"I thought you were laid up," said Rodwell, greeting him.

"I'm all right," came the answer, somewhat impatiently. "Where are you bound to, the Headland?"

" Yes."

"Is your business pressin'?"

Rodwell glanced up at him. "Yes, it is," he replied; "very pressing."

Shorder made no answer for a minute or two, and they went on together in silence. Then he said with a sudden bitterness: "You're like me, I take it, after the lady's money."



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The words had a meaning which offended Rodwell, and he was at first inclined to resent them. "Somebody's money is needed," he said presently, "if the people are not to starve."

"That's what I mean," Shorder answered; and

once more they were silent.

As they reached the gate, Shorder said, dismounting from his horse, "Jevvers ought to be here in half an hour. We wired for him yesterday."

"So I hear," answered Rodwell.

A groom came from the stables and took Shorder's horse, and the two men walked side by side towards the house.

They were half-way up the shingle path when a little maid some ten or twelve years of age came suddenly round the corner of the house with a skipping-rope. At sight of her, Shorder uttered an exclamation of bewilderment and came to a dead stop, gaping at the child.

She made a wonderfully romantic figure against the soft blue background of the sky, standing there with the handles of her skipping-rope clasped in one hand, the other hand brushing back her flaxen hair from her face and neck, as she stared at the two men. Her skin was of Southern skies and there were gold rings in her ears, telling of a foreign origin; but her hair was so fair as to be almost golden and her eyes were like Shorder's, wide-spaced, and of a gay hazel. She was dressed in a fawn-coloured stuff which reached to her knees, and had a cherry-coloured sash bound round her waist. She was tall and graceful, with clean-cut limbs and beautiful feet and hands.

Rodwell looked in amazement from Shorder to the child, and held his breath when Shorder, with tears

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in his eyes, went slowly and dazedly like a sleep-walker towards the child.

"Andrea?" he cried, opening his arms.

At that cry the child ran towards him, threw her arms round him, and pressed her face to his waist.

His hands wandered to her head, and stroked the fair hair. He looked like a man awaking from an opiate. He bent over her with dazed eyes and trembling hands, and kissed her hair.

She raised her face. Speaking to him excitedly in Spanish, she dropped her skipping-rope, and with eager hands opened a locket at her breast, and held it up to him.

He fumbled at his collar for a minute, and drew up the locket which Rodwell had seen the day before. As he opened it, and showed it to the child, she exclaimed in Spanish, and clapped her hands excitedly.

Rodwell heard her laughing delightedly as he walked towards the door.

Before the bell was answered Shorder had joined him, and all trace of emotion was gone from the giant's face.

They found Beatrice in the morning-room, over-looking the sea. She rose at once and came forward to meet them, giving simultaneously a hand to each.

"Richard!" she said, with a grave smile, looking for a moment at Rodwell; then turning quickly to Shorder, she said, "You have seen her?"

He nodded, and relinquishing her hand, walked to a chair, and sat down.

"You are not strong enough to be about yet,"

Beatrice said. "I told you I would bring her to you this morning. You should have waited."

"Colver came to me at seven o'clock," Shorder answered. "I'm here on his business. Rodwell, I think is huntin' the same fox. We both want money." She turned to Rodwell.

"You have often told me," he said, "to come to you in necessity."

"Of course."

"But to-day," he went on, looking at Shorder, "although the necessity is very great, I feel that perhaps I must stand aside. You want to discuss something with Mr. Shorder?"

"Stay, parson, stay," Shorder answered. "Don't go, man. We can talk privately after business." He turned to Beatrice. "Miss Haly, I'm broke to the world," he said, with an ugly wrench. Then he laughed. "It's come like yesterday's explosion, all of a sudden. When Colver hinted it to me last night you could have knocked me down with a feather. I knew I was sailin' pretty close to the wind, but I didn't expect to be capsized by a little bust of steam and a cracky valve. But I am. I'm in the deep, and I'm like to be swamped by mortgages and the Lord knows what else of financial jugglery."

"What can I do?" asked Beatrice.

"Colver told me last night, I didn't know it before, that Jevvers took up some of my mortgages with your money when he was here last time. I'm grateful to you for that. If I had known it sooner you should have been thanked sooner."

She smiled, and said: "I didn't know it either, so there's only Mr. Jevvers to be thanked. He will be here in a few minutes."

"He's a hard man," said Shorder, "and I don't blame him. But I haven't only come to ask you not to sell me up. I've come, by gad I have, to ask you to float me again! I don't mind the parson hearin' me. It has got to come out. That's how the matter stands, Miss Haly. I want some one to give me a chance to start the Works again. Jevvers will say it is madness. But I give you my word for it, I'm in dead earnest. I'll make the thing pay. I'll work night and day. No more foolin', no more playin' at work. I'll take my coat off. On my honour."

Beatrice smiled with happiness. "You have every incentive now," she said; "and I am sure you will succeed."

"I knew you would understand and be kind," he said, laughing; "but there's this confounded Jevvers to be talked over. Colver tells me he's like a rock when it comes to sellin' out capital."

"It is Mr. Jevvers that I fear," said Rodwell, smiling.

"We three are against him," Beatrice smiled; "the odds are in our favour. What do you want, Richard?" she asked.

Then he told her of the destitution of the town, and said that a large sum of money was necessary to relieve immediate distress, and that later on a still larger sum of money would be required to support the people until the Works could be started again.

Beatrice as she listened to him was struck by the quiet earnestness of his countenance. The old wistful expression of a disquieted sweetness had gone out of his face, and she saw now that his wandering and artistic mind had found itself in this grim tragedy of real existence. He was a man, no longer concentrated

upon himself, but a man with all his energies and faculties bent upon service to his fellows. He spoke with a clearness of vision and a wisdom of judgment which surprised her.

"Yes," she said, when he had made an end; "your need is a pressing one. It must be seen to at once. But in reality Mr. Shorder's need is the greatest. Our first effort must be to relieve immediate necessities, but our chief effort must be the finding of employment. At all costs and at all risks, the Works must be started again. They must be started, too, with a modern equipment. We must do everything to help Mr. Shorder to get his Works going on a basis that will leave little to chance and expect nothing of luck or philanthropy."

"By gad," cried Shorder, who had listened to her with admiration, "if ever a rippin' woman lived, it's you! Miss Haly, you're a stunner. You're not only good; you're wise with it. Listen to me; there's no foolin' about restartin' the Works. The future's a bright one. The price of tin is goin' up somethin' tremendous. These old Cornish mines, which have only been scratched, will be startin' again. They'll be started not with the old-fashioned machinery, but with the newest and best. Who's to make it? Why, there's no one in this part of the world can make minin' machinery as we can make it. We're on the spot.' We know the requirements. Get me started, and I'll pay ten per cent. on the money."

Beatrice smiled encouragement. "I have always thought," she said, "that with something to work for you would find your real self."

"But the deuce is," he said, getting up and walking about the room, "that it's easier to talk about

startin' the Works than doin' it. I mean the money needed will be enormous. God knows what I shall have to pay in compensation. Then there's the rebuildin' of the sheds, the buyin' of machinery—I couldn't sleep last night for thinkin' of it. You're as good as gold, Miss Haly; you're one in a million; but it will mean a fortune to start us, and I doubt if Jevvers will let you stand it; I doubt if I ought to ask you to stand it."

"Why, I can live quite happily in my Rest Home if that is necessary," she said, smiling. "I assure you that money is of very little use to me. It is only now, when I find I can help you in a really great matter, that I am glad of my money. Don't worry about Mr. Jevvers," she concluded, glancing at the clock; "he may have a thousand objections, he may be as obstinate as Mrs. Dumper's donkey, but he is not the master."

She told Shorder not to walk about the room, but to sit down and compose himself. "You will distress my dear Christabel," she said, smiling, "she is overhead, and she is still groaning from the effects of a sea-crossing." Then she turned to Rodwell. "I must help you first of all," she said, getting up from her chair. "Tell me how much money you ought to have for immediate use?"

"A thousand pounds won't go very far," he said.

She walked to the table in the window. "No, you will want more than that," she said quietly. "There are many homes in the town. My only fear is that the local bank will take a day or two to get what money is required. But the tradesmen must give credit. I will draw a cheque for a thousand pounds, and I will



write a note to the manager telling him that more money will be needed." As she was speaking Andrea ran across the garden in front of the window, and Shorder started up at the sound of her voice, and stood looking at her.

Beatrice came to Rodwell. "I have something to say to Mr. Shorder," she whispered. "When I have written the cheque take it to the bank, and I will come to you in the town presently. I have much to tell you, Richard, when we are alone; much, too, I think, to hear from you."

She put out her hand, and he took it quickly in his own. "I never knew till now, Beatrice," he said, and stopped, looking with love into her eyes.

A great happiness shone in her face. "I am so glad," she said, and pressed his hand.

As she turned, Shorder drew away from the window, and sinking into a chair buried his face in his hands. They could see his huge shoulders heaving and hear the muffled sobbing of his lips.

"I will write you the cheque," Beatrice said to Mr. Rodwell, as though she were unaware of Shorder's presence, and with her eyes she showed Rodwell that he should take no notice of the giant's grief.

She had opened her cheque-book, and had dipped her pen in the ink, when the door opened and Mr. Jevvers, followed by Mr. Colver, entered the room.

Shorder lifted his face from his hands, and looked away from them to the window. Rodwell moved forward to cover Shorder. Beatrice, turning from the table, gave her hand to them, and after a word of greeting addressed herself to Mr. Jevvers.

"We must put away all scruples concerning the sanctity of Capital," she said, smiling. "You have heard of the terrible disaster which has overtaken the town. Much money will be needed. For the present I am giving Mr. Rodwell something for present relief. He will go with it to the town. Afterwards we will discuss matters with Mr. Shorder. Excuse me for a minute," she concluded, and turned once more to her writing.

For a moment Mr. Jevvers hesitated. For a moment the only sound in the room was the scratching of Beatrice's nib. Then Mr. Jevvers moved forward, and went close to Beatrice, and asked her in a low voice what sum of money she was giving to Rodwell.

She looked up with a certain astonishment in her eyes. "You must prepare yourself, Mr. Jevvers," she said quietly, "to carry out all my wishes. This time there is no question of any objection."

She turned once more to her writing, but he did not leave her side.

"I had better see you alone," he said, after a minute.

She looked up. "When I have given Mr. Rodwell this cheque. I am keeping him."

"How much is it for?" he demanded again.

"A thousand pounds," she answered, with chill decision.

He wavered for a moment. Then he said to her huskily. "You mustn't sign it."

Something in his manner of saying it, something in the haggard look of the man, as he swayed at her side, made her lay down her pen and stand up. "What do you mean?" she asked. "Has anything happened?"



They had all heard it, and they looked with fear and anxiety at the swaying figure and the grey and ominous face of the lawyer. Shorder sat in his chair, gazing up with blank alarm in his eyes. Rodwell drew nearer, deadly white and his whole face set with the expectation of disaster.

"Let me see you alone," said Jevvers, in a hoarse voice. He put out his hand and steadied himself by clasping the back of the chair in which Beatrice had been sitting. The cover of the cheque-book lying open on the table overcame the opposition of the counter-foils and heaving up closed over the partially written cheque.

Beatrice walked to the door, and Jevvers followed her, with his head bent and his eyes on the ground.

"Colver," said Shorder, as the door closed upon them. "We're done."

Colver nodded his head.

"Somethin' has happened to Miss Haly's money. We're done. It's all up with us." His eyes were fixed upon Colver's face and he took no notice of Rodwell. "We shall be sold up; lock, stock, and barrel. We shall be beggared."

Again Colver nodded his head.

"There's no openin' anywhere?" Shorder questioned.

"I don't see any."

"We're clean bust, then?"

"I'm afraid so."

Shorder got up from his chair, and began pacing to and fro in the room. Every now and then he raised his eyes to the window as if he hoped to see the child with the skipping-rope. His face was hard and

stern; with the white bandages tied aslant his head he looked like a man who had just come out from a world-shaking battle, his eyes still dazed by the piled bodies of the slain. Rodwell, sitting with his arms folded over his breast, watched Shorder's face, and saw there the look of a strong man suddenly bereft of opportunity for action. He thought of a caged lion, but the metaphor did not fit. He thought of Samson shorn of his strength, but still the figure failed. No, it was like a soul still capable of tremendous things, still possessed of all its functions and all its powers, brought suddenly into a region where everything vanished at its touch. He was in hell.

After some ten minutes Beatrice returned to the room. She was alone, and her face was very pale. She came to Rodwell, who rose to greet her, and met his anxious gaze with steady eyes.

"I am so sorry, Richard," she said, "I cannot help you."

"It is hard for the people," he said; "but harder for you."

"Yes, it is a great disappointment."

"Nothing can be done to help you?" he asked.

"Apparently not. Almost everything has gone. What is left cannot be touched. It is called Trust money." She turned to Shorder. "I am so sorry," she said. "I am cut to the heart. I wanted very much to help you."

"I've got nothing to say to you," he answered, speaking with difficulty. "I just feel you're the best of human stuff. I think I want to cry."

Instead of crying, however, he laughed, and walked to the window and looked out across the sea. His



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Rodwell gave Beatrice his hand, and they walked together to the door.

T.V.

CHAPTER XXII

THE END OF A VIGIL

RODWELL turned to Beatrice when they reached the garden, and were standing in the broad sunlight together with the deep sighing of the summer sea coming to them gently through the blue haze of the morning. There was nothing for the eye to see or the mind to feel that did not suggest unbroken peace and continuous monotony.

"What is there for me to say?" he asked, studying her face for a moment. "I don't think I know how to tell you how sorry I am. I am numb with sympathy."

She saw in the daylight how grey and worn was his face. "My misfortune is small," she answered, "in comparison with that ruin"—she pointed towards the town. "You have been working hard, Richard; I must come and help you this morning, though my money would be more useful than myself. Of course I am pained; of course the news has come to me as a shock; but I am not wholly dependent on money for happiness."

She smiled, and put a lock of hair from her eyes. "I shall be happy enough," she said, "with what is left from the wreck."

"It seems hard to understand," he said, "how it

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has all gone in a moment. Jevvers gave you no warning, did he? You had no idea that anything was wrong?"

"He tells me that he telegraphed here to me while I was in Spain asking to see me," she said; "but I think he ought to have spoken to me years ago. I have not quite grasped what he has just told me, but it seems that the beginning of disaster was long ago. It was our telegram of yesterday that brought matters to a climax. There is not enough money, you see, to rebuild Bartown! I daresay I ought to have been more careful. I mean, I ought perhaps to have been more interested in my investments, and seen that they were wise."

"Does he give you any explanation?"

"Oh, he is voluble now; and he has brought down with him any number of documents to satisfy me that he is innocent of dishonesty. How his hands shook as he showed them. Columns and columns of dizzving figures, and a palsied plump finger going down one column and up another justifying the brain. man! I have not looked at them. It was enough for me when I induced him to say definitely that I was ruined of everything but a little Trust money. He did not say that easily. Justification and explanation are the points he sticks to. It is pitiable to see him. When a stone does weep, Richard, the human heart is melted with pity. I fear he is broken. seems to me, too, that he is in terror of prosecution. But I shall not harm him. I must look into his papers and documents later on, I suppose; but if he has robbed me I shall still not hurt him. I am not in the least vindictive. No; "she said, lifting her face to the sky, in that sudden energy of resolution which so often

gave passion to the natural quietism of her mind; "I am not concerned for my loss; I do not feel it; it cannot hurt me; it cannot touch the hem of my life. I am so glad of that. It is only because I cannot help you, and cannot help the town, that I am sorry; not for myself, Richard; I want you to know that, and remember it, because I see that you are sorry for me."

Her low voice, charged with the resolution of her mind, sounded a divine sweetness in his soul; and the calm of her beautiful eyes had a new and wonderful meaning for him. As he looked at her, there in the quiet of the cliff garden, with the great peace of the summer sea breathing up to her from below, and the hush of the high heavens descending upon her from above, he caught glimpses of a soul at unity with nature and a heart invulnerable in the midst of earthly shock and change.

She seemed in her disaster more beautiful and more supreme than he had ever thought her to be in all the years of her power. She seemed under that high canopy of blue, with the wide moor and the wide sea on either side of her, to stand so much alone and yet so securely. He felt that the lark who sang above her and the gull whose white wings flashed for a moment above the ridge of the cliff, must recognize in the tall and stately woman, who stood there so solitarily, a being not only utterly different from all the creatures of the earth, but one near to the dominion, beauty, and calm of divinity. She exalted humanity for him; she gave a grace to the earth and a glory to the heavens.

"Beatrice," he said, "for me all the tragedy of your loss is swallowed up in the joy that you are near to me again."

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A light shone in her face. "You are glad I have come back?" she asked.

They looked into each other's eyes. "Beatrice!" he whispered. Then he put out his hand, and said: "You are all the world to me."

She took his hand, and held it.

"What is the greatest thing in the world, Richard?" she asked softly, smiling into his eyes.

"Love," he answered, "love. There is nothing else."

"Say it once more," she said.

"Love. There is nothing else."

Her face was transfigured.

"Beatrice," he cried; "I have been blind!"

"I have waited, Richard," she said, releasing his hand, and walking with him towards the gate; "waited, waited, for this moment." She smiled, and drew in her breath with a slow pleasure. "In the midst of what the world would call disaster it has come. I look into your eyes, and I see there that it has come. Dear love, can you guess what it means to a woman, who has watched for many years over the soul of a man, when at last she reads in his eyes that her vigil has lasted to the dawn? The travail of your soul has been heavy. The night of your sorrow has been long. But the dawn has come. How calm, how beautiful it is. Richard, I am so happy. From childhood, from the hour when we played together as boy and girl, I have longed to be your other soul, your more than friend. the closest companion of your spirit. I knew it would not come in youth. Such love is not for youth. But I knew it would come if I waited. We two. In this world, and after-for ever and ever, moving on to greater knowledge, fuller powers, and deeper loveyour soul and mine. Oh, love, how good it is to live!"

"The past," he said, "is like a dream to me. All that kept me from you has broken and melted into the air. I smile to think of the madness in which I saw a barrier between your soul and mine. How far I have been from the secret of life, to think that any sacrifice of mine was greater than the gift of your love! How patient you have been: how kind: how good: how wonderfully generous. Oh, I have been shackled with a nightmare. For the first time in my life, I seem awake. How much bigger the earth, how much greater humanity, and how infinitely more precious the boon of life! I am glad. For the first time I can say, I am glad. Do you know what it is I feel, Beatrice?—it is as though I have been a slave and in prison all my life, and now for the first time know sunlight and freedom."

She put out her hand again, and as he took it they gazed into each other's eyes, and smiled with love.

"You have much to tell me," she said, "and I much to tell you. Shall we ever end what we have to say? But now, for the moment, we must part. You to your work, and I to mine. Is it not good, best beloved, that the joy has come to us in the midst of service to others?"

He lifted her hand to his lips. "I feel that I shall be able to help others now," he said.

- "You have come into the sunlight and freedom?" she asked.
 - " Yes."
 - "And the greatest thing in the world?"
 - " Is love."
 - "There is nothing else?"

THE END OF A VIGIL

"Nothing else."

"It is the satisfaction, the explanation, and the consecration of life," she said with a rapture of earnestness.

"It is the key to the universe," he answered.

They stood looking into each other's eyes without speaking; then after a moment they drew slowly away from each other, still looking, still smiling—their gaze assuring them of their perfect happiness and their joyful victory.

"Farewell," she said, almost under her breath.

"Farewell," he answered in a sigh that rose from his heart.

They turned, and walked their separate ways; he to the ruin of the town, she to the despair of Shorder, each with a glory in their eyes, each with a new power of assistance in their hearts.



CHAPTER XXIII

WHICH ATTEMPTS TO TELL HOW RODWELL FOUND HIMSELF

THERE was only one way open to Rodwell. The town was in a state of absolute destitution; all the labour and energy in the world could do nothing for it; one thing alone was essential, and that was money.

He wrote a long and moving description of the disastrous condition of things to the London newspapers. He appealed to the generosity of the world for money to save the town from starvation. He asked for the assistance of capitalists in building up anew the industry which had so suddenly been snatched from the people's hands. In a perfectly clear and business-like manner he stated the problem, but all through his letter breathed the fervour and deep feeling of a man appealing to his fellows in the sacred name of a common humanity.

It was the effect of this appeal to the world which determined the future course of Rodwell's life.

Numerous letters reached him containing stamps and postal orders from the working classes and cheques of a guinea and two guineas from people of the middle classes. At the end of a week, when he came to add up the sums which he had received, he found that the total was a little more than eighty-seven pounds.

Then it came to him with an overwhelming force of



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conviction that the world was Christless. He saw that the Gospel of Love was denied, and that the ethics of Mammon were acknowledged. In his terrible situation of standing, as it were, like a father to this ruined and starving town, and finding that when his children cried to him for bread he had only a stone to give them, he realized as the man willing to work and unable to obtain work realizes it, that humanity is not a brotherhood, but a house divided against itself, that life is not a consecration but a savage battle. Religion was a pious aspiration, not a fact. It was false to say that any considerable portion of mankind acknowledged God in all their ways. Self-denial—the very essence of Christianity—scarcely existed. It was still each man for himself: the object of all existence the accumulation of spoils. His thoughts carried him away from the crippled town where his lines were cast. He saw that throughout the world religion, put to its final test, was a failure. The unspeakable shame to humanity of a single ragged and rain-drenched woman, standing in the gutters of a Christian city, begging for bread, came home to him with a new and irresistible force. The horror of old and honest men going with tears into the workhouse, filled him with a fresh disgust for the ways of men. He thought of the incredible waste of wealth: the money openly lavished by men upon things clean contrary to the law of God; he thought of the vanity of the world, the pomp and splendour of Mammon, the glory in which vice lived and the richness with which selfishness moved across the world. In a new light he saw the intolerable affront to God of man's selfishness and vanity. If there were no poverty, no suffering, no agony of body and soul, still it was an offence to Heaven that men should live vain. useless and riotous lives. But while the world was so full of griefs unspeakable, while little children went hungry and ragged, while women sank in the scale for want of bread, and millions of men lived without joy because of their hard toil,—how awful the sin, how unpardonable the offence, of a single selfishness.

He had often thought of the appeals of hospitals when he had entered the smoking-room of a club and had seen the place crowded all day with men drinking and smoking and gossiping as if there were no work to do in the world. He had often thought of the slums in the Borough when he had looked into the suffocating card-rooms of London clubs, where rich men gamble till two and three o'clock in the morning. He had often thought of the destitution and bitter want of the poor when he had watched profligate men and women of fashion gambling on a race-course.

But now these drifting and scarce formulated thoughts took shape in the stress and reality of his present direful He saw the selfishness and vanity of the world as murder towards men and contempt towards God. His cleansed and concentrated mind beheld in the clear light of revelation the absolute and appalling godlessness of the jarring and controversial world. trial life was lived as if the soul were not immortal. Conduct was ordered as if there were no responsibility. Man made the journey round the sun some seventy times, thinking only of his own bodily comfort and the estimation in which he was held by the rich and successful of his acquaintance. God was not acknowledged. The fear of God scarcely existed: the love of God had no place at all in the world. The divine instruction, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," was entirely disregarded, or mocked as an obvious foolish-

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ness. Of a sudden he saw that men were without the sense of God.

As his thoughts paced in this way, he wondered if there were not some fragment of truth in the old fairy stories of spells and enchantments. It seemed to him that the whole earth had been cast into a profound slumber by the magic of some malevolent spirit and that men and women now lay under a spell in which it was impossible for them to perceive truth and reality. It was surely a form of some extraordinary madness to spend the brief and uncertain span of human life in amassing wealth, in making a show before men, and in living so entirely for the comfort and pride of the poor physical vehicle: surely it was madness of the most amazing kind to live as if life had no meaning, the gift of existence no responsibility, and the earth no place or lot in the destinies of the universe. Men must be mad. It was impossible that they could have any real conception of God. If He had spoken at all, He had spoken with the most terrible condemnation of selfishness and the most certain command to self-denial. And vet at one end of the scale there were wealth and luxury and vanity undreamed of by the princes of the pagan world; and at the other, beggary, raggedness, and ignorance such as were contained in no history of the heathen past.

He knew that to any man of sane vision the life of selfishness must be impossible. He knew that to any man really possessed of the sense of God the life of luxury and vanity must appear a dreadful and a ghastly abhorrence. If this were so, the real mission of religion to the world must be one of awakening. The world lay under the enchantment of darkness, it could not perceive God, it could not realize the

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eternity of existence. Religion must throw off sweetness and enticement, which sounded only like the strains of a far-off melody through the dreams of the sleepers. Religion must become a flaming sword. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead. and Christ shall give thee light." "The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" "Awake, ye drunkards." "It is high time to awake out of sleep." "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul alive?" "Behold I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

The revelation which came to him he summed up in a single phrase: The world comprehended neither the Fatherhood of God nor the Brotherhood of Man.

It was like a flash of light through the darkness and turmoil of his soul, when he perceived that the answer to the great prayer "Thy kingdom come," lay in the awakening of the world to these two great and fundamental realizations, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

Now at last everything became clear to him. Not for him was the sweetness of that intense realization of the Christ which steeped the mystic's soul in the peace of perpetual resignation. Never for him would come through the darkness the lovely haloed faced of the Sinless One, shining benediction on his soul. For him the business of life lay not with his own soul, but with the soul of the world. Like John Baptist he must preach, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven

is at hand"; and like John Baptist, he might even cry from the wilderness, "Art Thou the Christ, or look we for another?" Never for him the rapture of unbroken communion, nor the lulling calm of a perfect realization; nay, always it must be the battle and the storm and the tempest, and the cry, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

The horror of life lay heavy on his soul. He had seen in the slums of London things which distressed and pained him: public houses crowded till midnight with women and girls; young mothers, with little dazed babies in their arms, dancing, reeling, and singing through the gaslit streets; men living in filth, such as no animal would tolerate: and men and women spending their lives contented with a standard of existence which would disgust a savage. These things had hurt him. Many a time he had said that it almost passed the comprehension of man to consider that the vast majority of Englishmen went to their graves never having read a word of Shakespeare's Sonnets. But now the horror of life which lay heavy on his soul was of another kind. He was stunned at the realization of Christianity's failure. The call to self-denial was mocked. ridiculed, and dismissed by the swollen hosts of Mammon: and men and women, fighting for the spoils of time, went into eternity utterly and absolutely careless of God.

It was the impotence of his situation which drove home with such terrible conviction this truth to his soul. Easy it had been to take a tolerant view of the world, to mistake the doles of the selfish for the sacrificial charity of Christ, and to say with cheerful acquiescence, "God's in his Heaven, all's right with the world," if in His corner of the world he had found men working for the brotherhood of man in the name of the Fatherhood of God.

But instead of this, impotent to do anything in alleviation, he was called upon to witness day after day, the most tragic and heartrending scenes of human misery. The wrath of the people against Shorder rose as it came more clearly home to them that they would receive nothing from him in compensation for their loss. The maimed and crippled wage-earner was not to be rewarded, the dead husband and father was not to be paid for. Rodwell was called upon to restrain the fury of their indignation, while he replied to their supplications that he could do nothing. They respected Rodwell, they saw that he could not help them, but his excuses for Shorder fell upon deaf ears.

One night three of the squire's horses were mutilated in the park of The Hangers; on the following night his hounds were poisoned in the kennels; then his ricks began to be fired.

Rodwell expected the most terrible outbreak on Shorder's part, but the squire apparently was not to be moved. He lived at The Hangers with the child Andrea, and scarcely ever made his appearance in the town. Rodwell was far too busy with the overwhelming disaster which had overtaken his parishioners to pay a visit to the bankrupt, and Beatrice, when he saw her, could only tell him that Shorder was still dreaming dreams for rebuilding the Works.

Rodwell's heart might well be broken by the hopelessness of his task. Philip Letheby, maimed for life, might have been saved had there been money enough to bring a surgeon from London. Simon Eyre was bereft of his son, and the blow had shattered him. Poor little Susie, with the town's eye upon her, waited



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in poverty for motherhood. John Farnaby lay at death's door. The widows and the fatherless lived on the bread served out to them by Rodwell's fund. The crippled husbands and fathers asked for justice, and cursed the rich whom they accused of defrauding them. Beatrice's Rest Home was closing its doors, and Mrs. Blund was answering advertisements in the London newspapers. Beatrice could do nothing but visit the poor and hear out their pitiful stories. Vick, shunning both Rodwell and Beatrice, carried what relief she could to the starving people. then, one by one, Rodwell read the Church Service over the victims of the explosion, and one by one he bade good-bye to parishioners going out from the town with bitterness and anger to seek their fortunes in the world.

Nothing could be done. Appeals repeated in the London newspapers brought little or no relief. Bartown was too far away, too small to attract the sympathy of the great metropolis. To the rich financier it offered no prospect of dividends; to the title-hunting philanthropist it offered no advertisement. The fund raised by the county was only a charitable fund. Nothing for restoring the fortunes of the little place was suggested by the busy world. It seemed as if fate had taken a sponge to wipe this human habitation from the map and from the world.

Rodwell, unable to stand the strain of watching helplessly this crumbling away of his parish, went on a preaching tour in aid of its necessities. The clergy who had gathered round him as a great and erudite churchman, were amazed to find him now preaching repentance with all the fervour and passion of a Revivalist. He shocked some of them: he converted

others; he startled all who heard him. He pleaded for no charity; he rebuked with warning and indignation the world for Christlessness. His message was, "Awake, thou that sleepest." He made of the ruin of Bartown a dreadful charge against the world that it was Godless. He declared that the Brotherhood of Man, the fundamental doctrine of Christ's teaching, was denied by the State, by the Church, and by the individual, every day of the week. If England really acknowledged that doctrine, on the day of the disaster to the little town a thousand hands would have been at work restoring the ruin of human happiness. But as it is, the hospitals cry out every day for money, women earn their bread by shame, children stand in the gutters begging, and millions of men and women live absolutely without joy. pared this poverty and sin and misery, with the extravagances, the vulgarity, and the shameful ostentation of the rich. He made even those who could not see the revelation which had come to him, at least feel that all was not yet well with the world, and that it was still necessary to pray with some deeper meaning, "Thy Kingdom come."

As for Rodwell himself, he had at last discovered his vocation. Into his life there came for the first time deep feeling and tremendous passion. He was dragged away from the benign atmosphere of refinement and culture in which he had yearned for a closer and a more mystical communion with the Saviour, and he was forced by Circumstance to go out into the world naked of everything but the invective of Christ. He saw life now more clearly; men and women became more real to him. He dealt no longer in words and phrases, he handled the actual business of life. The



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Church provided him with his opportunity, he reverenced and obeyed her; but she was no longer either a channel or an obstacle between his soul and God. His tradition now was the cry, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," and his loyalty now was to God and humanity.

There were those who said that the disaster in Bartown had distorted his imagination and warped his judgment. Many people said that this revivalism was only a phase in his life, that it would pass, and that once more he would settle down with the rest of the world to wait tolerantly for something to happen. But there were those who saw in him now a man who had found himself, a man who had ceased to be any longer an echo and a shadow, however beautiful, a man who had become real. Among these was the Bishop of the diocese who had great affection for him, and the woman who loved him. To the Bishop, who was a socialist, Rodwell appeared now as a man fit to go through the diocese inspiring clergy and laity with a divine discontent at the state of human society and the lethargic tolerance of the Church. To Beatrice, though her nature was antipathetic to any urgency in eternal things, and whose vision of God was one of persistent purpose and a most gradual evolution, Rodwell, with his cry of Repentance and the fierceness of his rebuke. stood now as a great man as well as a lovable man. She felt a kindling enthusiasm for the vigour of his character, the strength and passion of his new nature. He had emerged from the shadows. He stood for her in the open light of day, a real man engaged in universal conflict. She knew now that if any man asked him what it was to be born again, he could give answer. She knew now that to exalt human

love, not to deny it, was an impulse of his heart and soul.

So, in the midst of her own ruin, peaceful and without murmur, her steadfast soul looked out upon the man she loved, and she knew that though the world had taken from her great possessions, God had yet given her all things.



CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH SOME OF OUR CHARACTERS APPEAR FOR THE LAST TIME

MRS. BIDDICOMBE, on a beautiful summer day in June, turned Joseph's head from the turnpike road and directed him towards The Hangers. The uncommunicative Joseph, taking very small steps and pointing his ears with unusual energy, was as much surprised by this new route as he had been all the way over the hill by the strange silence of his mistress. As if the new turn was too much for him, no sooner was he quite inside the lodge gates than he put down his head, gave a little hump to his shoulders and a little shake to his hind-quarters, and broke into a most absolute and undeniable trot.

Mrs. Biddicombe was taken so much by surprise at this extraordinary behaviour of her donkey that she very nearly toppled out of the cart. She clutched the side of it with one hand, drew the reins up to her chin with the other, and called upon Joseph to stop his tricks immediately. But Joseph appeared to like the exercise; something in the air of the park and the curve of the drive pleased him, and taking no account whatever of Mrs. Biddicombe's hysterical jags at his snaffle, he put down his head, arched his back, and shot forward at a mad little gallop.

So Shorder, who happened to be walking in the garden with Andrea listening to her talk about Castile. had the enjoyment of beholding the enormous Mrs. Biddicombe bumping and jolting in her little spring cart behind the terror-stricken apparition of a runaway donkey. The baskets behind were jerking up and down, and eggs were shooting out to right and to left, cracking and emptying their yellow yolks upon the Mrs. Biddicombe, purple and scared of face. and leaning back as far as she dare, with a rein in each hand, and the point of her stick pushing off her bonnet, was tugging at Joseph's mouth as if she meant to pull the donkey's head off altogether. Shorder laughed for the first time for many a long day, and catching Andrea's hand ran with her, shouting with delight "Yoicks!" and "Forrard we go!" to intercept the furious progress of the bewitched Joseph.

"Goo' Lard!" gasped Mrs. Biddicombe, her hands clutched to her heart, as Shorder seized the bridle of Joseph, and brought him to an unwilling stop: "fifteen years come August the Twenty-second have I known my Joseph, and treated him like myself all the blessed time, and never once before have I seen him take on and behave himself like a wicked devil. My heart's beating so as I can hardly get my breath," she went on, rubbing her face with her apron, while the broken yolks of the eggs dripped through the floor of the cart on to the drive beneath. "I feel as if I shall never dare to go driving again. If Mr. Biddicombe could ha' seen me careering and bumping along like that he'd ha' took and choked himself with fright, and died in a minute."

When she had recovered herself, she looked round at her disordered baskets. "O my dear soul!"

she exclaimed; "if he haven't been and broke thirty eggs or more! Oh my poor heart! look at the butter! Streaming with yaller! Goo' Lard, was there ever such a ruination o' things." It was quite ten minutes before she could estimate her losses, and bring herself to state her errand.

"Squire," said she at last, "was it you who put Lawyer Colver on to higgling wi' me about they three little cottages o' mine up to Trewithian?"

"Not I," he answered.

"Are you sure, Squire?"

"Certain sure, my dear!"

"Well, lookee here; Lawyer Colver back along was mazed to get hold of they cottages. He and that Mr. Jevvers was up there day after day, and another gentleman, I don't know his name, but he come from up the country; and they was all walking about that little moor o' mine picking up things and examining things, and walking off with them, just as if the land was their very own. But they didn't know that a tenant o' mine saw them and talked to me about it after; ah, that they didn't!—so when Lawyer Colver come to me offerin' to buy the land like ord'nary property, he were surprised to find that I knew the value and wouldn't sell to him nor to nobody."

"This is news to me, my dear," said Shorder. "What have you got up there, a gold mine?"

Mrs. Biddicombe nodded her head. "You'm right," she said.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Shorder, laughing.

"Now, Squire, my dear," continued Mrs. Biddicombe, "you just take and listen to me and you'll learn wisdom. If you'll work the land yourself and have nothing, mind, to do with the lawyers,



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I'll give you that bit of moor for a present. Mind, no lawyer! If you trust to they, they'll rob vou thick and thin. There's one man you may trust and one only, and that's Captain Duck, who's one of God A'mighty's best. What does he say to me: 'Mrs. Biddicombe,' he says, 'you're worth a hundred thousand pounds if you're worth a penny.' Lookee, Squire; it's a fact. That little moor o' mine grows summat they calls uranium just as Mr. Pamfrey grows pertaters in your garden. It's better nor gold, uranium is, though I've never seen it, and don't want to, for my dealings is with poultry and eggs and the best scalded butter. But you may take it, and do what you like with it; and Mr. Biddicombe says we have got a nice little bit put by, quite enough for us two, and we've neither chick nor child, and he says the money will be useful to the town, and it will get the sheds built again and the furnaces agoing; and he says you'll be a rich man vet, and he says that though you've been a wild devil in your time and like to be so to the day of your death, still, you never yet did a man a willing wrong, and he hopes you may prosper and help Bartown to better days and the old contentment."

Shorder was staggered and stunned. At first he could not grasp the tidings, then with a rush he understood, and his gratitude knew no bounds. The relief from the tension of the last terrible days made him wild with excitement. He, who would have doubted any advice from Colver or any tidings of good news from Jevvers, felt persuaded that what this good old higgler said was true. It was like a fairy-tale. Deliverance always came from the least expected quarter. Money would be his; money to build the Works again;

money to show the lily-livered swipes in the town that he was a master-man. A little money would be sufficient to stay bankruptcy proceedings. little more money would be sufficient to deal with tin mines on his estate and turn them into paying concerns. He was saved. He was saved. "Come down from your cart, my dear!" cried, laughing to excuse the tears in his eyes. had been snatched so suddenly from despair to hope that he could hardly trust himself to speak. Half laughing and half crying he cried: "Come down from your cart. I'll kiss you till you can't breathe. and I'll dance with you till you haven't got a leg left. 'Tis true what you say, Mrs. Biddicombe, my dear. I believe you every word. How can I thank you? How can I tell you what this means to me? Why, you've saved me! Woman, you've saved me! Andrea!" he cried, suddenly turning to the child, "this beautiful woman is an angel from heaven. Parsons will tell vou that angels dress in white, wear wings, and look like nothin' on a stick; it's a fairytale. Angels wear bonnets and white aprons, and when they mount a donkey-cart they go near to breaking the springs. Behold an angel! Mrs. Biddicombe, my dear, give me a kiss! I'll pay you twenty per cent. on the money. I'll buy you a motor-car for your higglin'. I'll give old Biddicombe all the port in my cellars. Uranium is it? No. it's Eureka!"

Mrs. Biddicombe refused to get down from the cart, and sternly forbade Shorder to mount the step; but she leaned over the side, and without standing tiptoe he was able to embrace her, which he did very heartily, kissing her on both cheeks till her bonnet slipped all to one side and she nearly exploded with his hugging.

Half an hour after this delightful deliverance from his immediate troubles, Shorder and Andrea made their appearance in Bartown. The scowling people in the square were angered to see him looking so cheerful, but their faces cleared a little when he sang out to them in his familiar voice that the tide had turned. "There'll be work and compensation for all except cattle-maimers and rick-burners!" he cried out, with an ugly look on his face.

He called at the cottages of some of his chief workmen and consulted with them as to starting the Works again. He went to see Captain Duck, but found that he was away. He sent for Colver and told him that the bankruptcy proceedings must be delayed.

It was like a sudden burst of sunshine to see him going so heartily and gladly through the town; the people of the place went into their homes with a new sense of happiness; and the tale spread that the pretty girl at his side was a wealthy Spanish heiress who was going to rebuild the Works.

The London train had just come in when Shorder, still quivering with excitement, and with Andrea's hand in his, set out to walk to the Headland. On the top of the cliff they found Beatrice, Christabel, and Mr. Jevvers walking slowly up and down in the sunshine. Captain Duck was approaching them.

Mr. Jevvers had been a week in bed, and looked still dreadfully ill. He had made a full confession to Beatrice. It appeared that he had been drawn into the wild madness of company-promoting by the failure of certain large investments in South Africa due to the War. He had first conceived of the idea in order merely to get back what he had lost, but gradually the fever had grown upon him and he had committed himself to

some of the most rash and dishonest of London speculators. He confessed to Beatrice that he was in her power, and that, if she wished, she could ruin him. He pleaded with her to give him another chance, promising her that if he could retrieve, as he believed he might, his broken fortunes, she should be paid to the uttermost farthing.

Beatrice, who nursed him through his illness, not only promised that she would not have the matter of her ruined fortunes investigated, but readily forgave him for the wrong he had done to her.

Andrea ran forward to greet Beatrice and arrived at the same time as Captain Duck. The child and Beatrice were laughing and talking together when Shorder joined them.

"I've come on business," said Captain Duck, leaning heavily on his stick, and regarding Mr. Jevvers grimly. "I'm not paying a friendly call. Perhaps I'd better wait till Mr. Shorder has got through what he has to say, and the ladies are not here to listen."

They all turned and looked at the slow-speaking old man, and saw that he was in dead earnest.

"Why, I want to see you myself," said Shorder. "I've been talkin' to Mrs. Biddicombe. Uranium, Duck! We're goin' to make a fortune, old fellow!"

"Ah!" replied Duck, "and but for this lying rascal I might have made my own fortune and Mr. Letheby's too." He looked fixedly at Jevvers. "Yes, sir," he said, "the words are ugly words, but they're true. You are, and there's no mistake about it, a lying rascal. If you don't know it you must be what they call demented. For you are a lying rascal, and nothing but a lying rascal. If I wasn't a man o' peace, I'd take this stick of mine and

I'd lay it about you till you were black and blue. Black and blue, sir! For you are a lying rascal. A lying rascal. That's what you are, sir, a lying rascal."

He turned his big round face with its placid eyes to Beatrice. "Miss Haly," he said, "I'm sorry to speak such language before you. But my blood is up, miss. I'm at boiling point. I feel as if I could eat a mountain."

"What has happened?" she asked. "Perhaps there is some mistake."

"The mistake, lady, lies in my ever having trusted this lying rascal. That was the mistake. What has he done? The mine that me and Mr. Letheby bought the option of with our own sagacity and our own poor savings, this lying rascal of a knowing lawyer, has sold out of our hands for thirteen thousand pounds. That's what he has done. Thirteen thousand pounds is the price paid, and he can't deny it. He has robbed me; he has robbed my children. He knew, for I told him the first time I ever saw him, that I was the father of nine. Five girls and four boys. He knew that. And vet he took and robbed me. I say it's not to be wondered at that my blood is at boiling point. I'm a loving father. God knows I love my children. knows it was for them and not for myself, that I went tramping the moors for a matter of seven or eight months. And this lying rascal has taken the bread out of my children's mouths. He has lied to me. has stolen from me. If I wasn't contented-minded I'd-I'd smash him!"

Mr. Jevvers, too weak for indignation, attempted to explain that if indeed the mine had been sold for so high a price he himself had made nothing of it. But Shorder prevented Captain Duck from hearing what he said. "Never mind," he was saying, "you'll make a fortune yet. There's stuff over at Trewithian worth all the gold in the world. Cheer up, cap'en, keep the flag flyin'; there's a good time comin', and we aren't dead yet."

Beatrice, with Andrea holding her hand, led Mr. Jevvers, weakly expostulating at Captain Duck's infamous attack, back to the Headland. Christabel declared icily that something certainly appeared to be wrong somewhere, and that obviously matters required to be looked into.

She had been kindness itself to Beatrice when she first heard of the loss of her fortune. "My dear," she had said, "I have put by a little money, and it shall be yours. We will take a pretty cottage, and we will do with one servant, and we will give up Society altogether and prepare ourselves quietly for Paradise. After all it is not a bad thing to be shown the utter vanity of riches. At the same time I cannot help thinking that you ought to have a respectable solicitor or a Lord Chancellor, or somebody, to inquire into the affairs of Mr. Jevvers, a man I have always cordially disliked, and, as you well know, distrusted."

At this fresh evidence of the duplicity of Mr. Jevvers, Christabel lost all thought of preparing herself for Paradise in her resolution and strengthened conviction that a Lord Chancellor, or somebody, might yet find a few pickings for Beatrice in the ruin of Mr. Jevvers' fortunes. She spoke in her acidest voice, and she did not scruple to tell Mr. Jevvers to his face that evidently something was wrong somewhere and that obviously matters ought to be looked into.

Shorder and Captain Duck, walking some paces behind, were presently overtaken by two powerfullooking men who were strangers to them and had the appearance of Londoners newly arrived by the train. They walked slowly passed Shorder and Captain Duck, took a good look at them, and then went on in silence towards the Headland.

Captain Duck stopped, and touched Shorder on the arm. "Detectives!" he whispered.

"By gad, I believe you're right!" cried Shorder.

"That's what they are," said Captain Duck. "The game's up. I knew they'd be bound to have such a lying rascal. As they went by, I felt a cold feeling down my back. 'Justice,' I said to myself; 'the Law's after him.'"

The detectives, for such they were, approached Jevvers quietly just before the gate of the Headland was reached. The unhappy man, turning to enter the gate, saw them and immediately interpreted their mission. The blood drained from his face leaving it ghastly white. His little eyes sank deeper into their sockets. The line of his lips was like a weal. He stood with his body upright, but with his legs rocking at the knees, facing them.

Shorder and Captain Duck saw him collapse like a suit of empty clothes, as the two men reached the gate and spoke to him, while Andrea clung to Beatrice, and Christabel laid her hand to her heart.

"Poor fellow." said Captain Duck, brushing away the sweat from his forehead: "I would to God, I hadn't called him a lying rascal."

While this scene was being enacted on the cliff at the garden gate of the Headland, in his bedroom in Gun Cottage, the soul of the little dormouse was making preparations for departure from earth's human shores.

He had been the least exacting of invalids. What-

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ever Mrs. Dumper brought in a bowl on a neat tray to his bedside, that did he eat without a murmur of complaint however little appetite he had for food of any kind. To Frank's stammered question whether he would not like Rodwell to come and see him, he had made answer, "No, my dear fellow; but if it does not trouble you I should like you to sit with me and read a little Dickens."

He appeared to be quite unaffrighted by the journey before him, and reverently trustful in the mercy of God. "I can trust His kindness," he had said. It is no exaggeration of his state of mind to say that he regarded the Almighty not so much as a tender Father or a mighty Omnipotence, but rather as the most courteous and chivalrous creator of English Gentlemen. He felt himself to be a humble guest entering another mansion in the beautiful and very splendid pleasaunce of God's universe, and he trusted that by a modest behaviour and a decent bearing he might be welcomed by his Host and allowed to mingle unobtrusively with the other guests.

He was fastidious about the condition of his bed and his room. The linen was frequently changed. He kept a box of musk cachous by his side. There were flowers on the mantelpiece and dressing-table. He was careful about brushing his hair and combing his moustache and whiskers. He wore his eyeglass round his neck, and would sometimes fix it in his eye and turn upon his elbow to look through the open window at the flagstaff in the garden. He was very courteous and polite. He inquired every day of Mrs. Dumper after the health of Fluffy and hoped that Poppy was eating her oats like a good donkey. They kept from him the terrible condition of the town and the

ruin of Shorder, and he expressed the hope that there would be no delay in rebuilding the Works and giving employment to the poor people.

Occasionally it seemed to Frank that there was something upon his brother's mind. The little man would sometimes sigh desperately and pass a wasted hand across his forehead. Frank would look up from his reading to find the eyes of John fixed upon him with an expression almost of fear. It was so on this afternoon in June. Frank was reading at John's request the account of that terrible and unequal encounter between Dr. Slammer of the 97th and Mr. Winkle of the Pickwick Club. John never asked for sad and pathetic passages. His days of quiet fading into eternity were ministered to by the bright humour and the gay exaggeration of the author he loved. "How good that is!" he would exclaim, with a relish, and Frank would hear him laughing weakly.

But looking up from the page on this afternoon, Frank found the old fear in his brother's eyes, and he stopped reading.

"John," he said, lowering the book to his lap; "is

there anything I can do for you?"

John made no answer, but continued to regard his brother with wistful anxiety.

"There is something you want to say to me?"

Frank asked, laying his hand upon the bed.

Still John stared and said nothing. The buzzing of bees in the garden and the slow glad twittering of birds on every shrub and tree came to them with the heat of the sun and the scent of the flowers.

It seemed to Frank, waiting for John to speak, that his brother was passing into delirium, and he sat leaning forward watching him with loving anxiety.

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"My dear fellow," said John, at last, fetching a deep sigh, and speaking very huskily. "I have got a confession to make to you."

"You have always been the best and kindest and most considerate of elder brothers," replied Frank, with deep emotion.

John sighed, and after looking long and anxiously upon his brother, he turned his face away, and said in a strained voice: "My dear fellow, I never shot that tiger!"

It was the great confession of his life, and it was wrung from his heart with agony.

"John," replied the brother, "you never said you did!"

"But I never said that I did not," answered John, sadly. "My dear fellow, I must not go before my Maker, leaving you behind with the impression that I had shot that tiger. I never shot any tiger. I never had the opportunity. If I had had the opportunity, I daresay I might have had some luck with the rifle. I was a very fair shot, Frank. Fellows used to say I had a pretty good eye. But I did not shoot that tiger."

"I knew it," said Frank, affectionately, "and I was always proud of you because you never said you did. Hundreds of fellows would have said they did. You never actually said you did."

"I could never tell an absolute lie," replied John, "but there was something we learned at school about, I think, suppressio veri, which ought to have checked me. It seems a paltry thing now, my dear fellow, the shooting of a tiger. How vain a thing is man. The shooting of a tiger! The shooting of ten tigers! Pooh, it is nothing."

He stretched out his hand to the table and took the

comfit-box. "And now, if it does not tire you," he said, taking a cachou, "will you read on? You got to where Mr. Snodgrass had admonished Winkle to be steady and wing Dr. Slammer."

In reality Frank had got to the place where the imperturbable man with the camp-stool had offered to relieve any possible affront which Mr. Snodgrass might feel, from certain remarks he had made, by giving that eminently pacific gentleman immediate satisfaction. But Frank, who saw how anxiously his brother's mind had been working and realized with a tug at his heart that perhaps confession had been inspired by the sham sportsmanship of Mr. Winkle, went back in his reading and continued the tale.

John laughed very happily to the end of the chapter, and at its conclusion said that he thought he would sleep a little.

"My dear fellow," he said, "if one may say so reverently, it is a great pleasure to look forward to meeting the soul of Dickens in the next world. I feel I know him already. I don't think it will be presumptuous to claim acquaintance. I should like to shake his hand, and say 'Thank you.'"

He closed his eyes, and turned upon his side. "Don't trouble to sit with me," he said, drowsily. "There's Poppy to be fed, and the chickens. Don't forget Nelson and Drake. But take care of yourself. Don't overdo it, my dear fellow. Remember you are delicate. You mustn't play tricks with yourself."

Something told Frank that it was the end. He stood by the bedside, very pale and drawn, looking down upon the wasted face of his brother. Then he stooped and kissed him. "God bless you, John," he whispered in a shaking voice.



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John half opened his eyes for a moment. "God bless you, my dear fellow," he whispered back. Then he said, drowsily: "The scent of the roses comes through the window. Very sweet. Very sweet. The cooing of the pigeons, too. I seem to hear the fluttering of the halyards. Good-bye Frank. I'm so much obliged to you. Don't overdo it, my dear fellow. Take care of yourself."...

As he fell asleep a thrush flew across the garden singing loudly, and Fluffy charged suddenly into the hall barking at nothing.

"Hush, Flury!" whispered Frank, coming on tiptoe down the stairs which was bright with afternoon sunlight. And to Mrs. Dumper who came out of the kitchen in chase of the dog, he said: "Mr. John is sleeping. We must keep the house very quiet."

CHAPTER XXV

WHICH TELLS THE STORY OF SHORDER

SHORDER, with little Andrea at his side, was playing the Volsung music in the hall of The Hangers. The sun streamed through the upper windows and made a golden haze about the organ. As the music climbed to intensity in Brünnhilde's final sacrifice in Götterdammerung, Shorder's mind went back to a shining morning in Bayreuth when in the hey-day of his hot-blooded youth, across the innumerable shimmer of golden cornfields and the drowsy music of bees in the heavy-scented limes, he had heard suddenly, and for the first time, the fanfare of Parsifal, with the motif calling him to another world.

He ceased playing, his hands fell in his lap, and he turned and looked at the child.

"Well," he said in Spanish, "is it good music, little Andrea?"

She nodded her head. "It is quite different," she said quietly in broken English.

"From your mad Spanish dances?" he laughed.

"From everything else," she answered. "It is different from Church music. Different from everything."

"What do you think of this?" he asked turning to the keys. He tried for the first time in his life, humming as his hands fumbled at the notes, to play the motif of Parsifal. But he failed, and ceased trying. "I can't manage it," he said laughing. "I was trying to give you religious music." He got up and passed his hand over her head, where the sun was shining on her hair. "I am going to see Miss Haly," he said. "Will you stay here and be happy till I return?"

She asked to be taken to the Headland, but he told her he was going thither on business.

"May I walk to meet you?" she asked.

He lifted her chin gently and tilted up her face. "Do you want to come and meet me?" he asked, smiling into her eyes.

For answer she threw her arms about him and pressed her face to his body. "Why do you ask me such questions?" she said, with a child's vexation. "You know I love you."

"Because," he answered laughing, "I'm so unused to love!" Then he stroked her face. "Yes, Andrea," he said, "come to meet me. Start from here in an hour and a half's time. Come across the fields. I shall be walking, and we'll run back together." He patted her cheek, and went down the stairs.

For a moment or two she stood and watched him going down through the sunlight into the gloom of the hall; then she ran lightly down the stairs, picked up his hat and stick from off the chest where they lay, and gave them into his hand. She went with him to the door, opened it for him, and passed out into the sunlight at his side, her hand in his.

"Farewell, Andrea," he said, and was passing on, when her little fingers detained him. "What do you want?" he asked smiling.

"You never kiss me," she complained.

He laughed and bent down and kissed her. She laid her arms round his neck and pressed his face to hers. "I love you so much," she said, releasing him.

"Andrea," he said, looking down at her, "do you love Miss Halv too?"

"Yes," she answered, "I love her too; but you best of all."

He turned three times on his way across the park to wave his hand to her, and each time she blew him the pure affection of a child's kisses.

He found Beatrice in the garden reading a letter. She looked up at the sound of his step, put away her letter, and came forward to greet him. He was struck by some new expression in her countenance, some arresting look of earnestness and awakened energy in her eyes.

They went to the seat which overlooked the cliff, and sat with their faces to the sea.

"I've just received," he said, "an extraordinary letter from our friend the parson dated from the Bishop's palace. It has knocked me all of a heap. He tells me he is leaving Bartown, that his work in the world won't need money, and that he has instructed his lawyers to sell out and send me his little fortune of fifteen or sixteen thousand pounds. It's his gift to Bartown. His contribution to startin' the Works again. He says some pretty straight things about your humble servant, but is kind enough to believe that I mean business and can save the town from goin' to the dogs. I don't know what to do about the matter. I thought I'd come up and ask your advice."

Beatrice said she, too, had heard from Rodwell; that what he had decided to do with his money was right and good, and that Shorder must accept it and

devote it to the great work of rebuilding Bartown. She told him that the Bishop had persuaded Rodwell to become the Missioner of the diocese, and that henceforth he would spend his days in going from parish to parish awakening people to a sense of religion.

"Convertin' them to Socialism!" he corrected with a laugh. "The Bishop's a Socialist, a regular redbannered demagogue. A fine thing this is. Why, what's the use of my restartin' the Works if Rodwell and the Bishop are goin' to buy them for the State as soon as they're payin' a profit!"

She inquired about the Trewithian property, and learned that the prospects were good. An eminent man of science had inspected specimens of the pitch blend and had pronounced a favourable judgment upon them. The place could either be sold immediately for a round sum of money, or worked by Shorder himself at an immense annual profit.

"I'm goin' to work it myself," he said, "and I've set things in motion already. I've quieted my obligin' creditors; I've sold up a lot of lumber at The Hangers; I've sacked thirty useless servants; and now Andrea and I are settled down to the pinch of plain livin' and high thinkin' as comfortably as two bees in a crocus." He burst out laughing, and looked quickly at Beatrice as he pulled his hat down with a jerk over his eyes.

"I think," he said, after a moment, taking a cigar from his pocket and holding it up for her permission to smoke, "that it's about time I told you the story of Andrea. I came across just now to tell it. You were very good in goin' to visit Valladolid for me. Who else in the world would have done it? I told you I had a message which only a friend could carry for me to Valladolid. I told you it was urgent

a part of my life; and that was enough for you. You asked no questions. You guessed, perhaps; perhaps you understood, but the thing is that, without asking questions, you went. When you wrote and told me that Andrea's mother was dyin', and asked me to come out, and I sent back word by Rodwell that I mustn't, you took it without a murmur. You have never asked me for an explanation. Miss Haly, I think you're the best woman I ever knew. You've been such a friend to me that I can't tell you exactly how I feel towards you. But you know I'm grateful; you know I'd go across the world to do you a turn."

He paused and lit his cigar.

"When she died," he went on slowly, "you brought back little Andrea without a word to me. You didn't know whether you were compromisin' yourself; you didn't know whether I should be angry with you; you just brought the little girl back with you, and did the right thing."

"I think I know the story," she said quietly.

"Ah, I wondered if she had told you."

"Just before the last, when she asked me to take Andrea back with me to England, she told me. Till then she was faithful to her vow of silence. When she asked me to write and call you to her, she hinted at the truth, but didn't tell it, though she wanted very much to see you."

He sat silent and grim, staring out to sea, with his lips moving beyond his control.

The story which Beatrice had learned in Valladolid was this: In his twenty-second year, when he was wasting his fortune in the most riotous excesses, Shorder had encountered in the streets of Valladolid a beautiful creature who earned a humble living as a

chocolate maker. Enamoured of her beauty he had forced himself upon her confidence, and learned that she was one, Leonor Cabrera, a young widow who had come to Valladolid a year ago, and lived by herself in a little room high up in a blistering white building in a narrow street on the other side of the river Pisuerga.

For many weeks this shy and timorous creature, who always walked with eyes downcast, nursing the shadows of the tall houses as though she shrank from observation of the world, withstood all the passionate advances of the roystering young Englishman, and implored him not to harry her with his attentions. But by degrees her timidity melted away from her; his persistency broke down her fear of him; became accustomed to finding him waiting for her in the street, and at last, she would sit with him under the trees by the river laughing at his bad Spanish. She permitted him presently to come and sit in her room, where a canary sang in the window, and the shaded sill was bright with flowers. She would roll cigarettes for him, and sing to him, and laugh at his efforts to teach her English. He saw in this change only the gratifying evidence of a growing love. He loaded her with presents, he took her out with him into the country, he told himself again and again that he was winning her love.

The fascination which she exercised upon him, this tiny, dark-eyed, soft-voiced creature of Old Castile, deepened its spell. He could think of no one but her, he could not be happy except at her side. She would let him hold her hand, and grew accustomed to the sudden bursts of passion in which he would lift the little hand to his lips and cover it with kisses. She would

look up at him with open admiration in her eyes which flattered him.

"You are so big and strong," she would say. "You English are very brave. I like brave men. They are kind and gentle."

Three months from the day when he had first seen her hurrying with downcast eyes through the streets, Shorder married Leonor Cabrera. He wrote home to his father that he was prolonging his visit to Spain, and said nothing of his marriage. His father was an old man, an old man who indulged his big-limbed son in every whim, but Shorder shrank from telling him that he was married. He put off the day of explanation because he was so happy.

They had been married five months, and were still living in Valladolid when Pedro Cabrera, the husband of Leonor, returned from the dead. She had often desired to tell Shorder about her first husband, but he had always silenced her, hating the subject, and not only because he knew the man had been cruel to her.

It was a wonderfully still evening in the month of August. Shorder and his wife were sitting on the balcony of their house under the shade of an awning watching the people and the horses in the dazzle of sunlight in the square below. At her side was a table with a dish of oranges; Shorder was smoking cigarettes and drinking lime juice. They were happy in a light and frivolous fashion. A fat woman waddling across the square was sufficient to set them laughing. A group of sky-larking boys entertained them. A pompous corregidor acknowledging the salutes of inferior officials amused them. Leonor's canary was singing above their heads.

They did not at first hear the opening of the door and the drawing aside of the portière. The clattering of wheels over the cobble stones deadened all sounds in the room behind them, and their eyes were set only on the cheerful life of the sunlit square below.

Pedro allowed the English servant to go forward in advance of him, and stood in the centre of the room waiting. At the mention of Cabrera's name the blood flew from the face of Leonor, and she shrank away from the room, gaping with terror at Shorder. The servant withdrew as soon as he had announced the visitor, and noticed nothing. Shorder got up, very white, and turned his face to the room.

Leonor clutched his hand. "Don't let him hurt me," she gasped.

"No one shall hurt you," he said, "stay where you are."

He entered the room, and approached Cabrera, who at first scowled at him angrily, but presently quailed a little before the smouldering passion in the young Englishman's eyes.

"What do you want?" demanded Shorder.

"Ca! my wife," replied Pedro, spreading his hands. Shorder studied his face for a long time. "Follow me," he said at last, and led Pedro into another room. "Wait here," he said, "till I come to you."

"Do you not expect a knife in your heart?" demanded Cabrera wrathfully.

"You may smoke while you are waiting," replied Shorder, and walked from the room.

He returned to Leonor who threw herself into his arms, begging him and imploring him to protect her from Cabrera. He realized then how it was she had taken comfort from his great strength in the days of

their courtship. As he felt the frail body clinging to his strength, and saw the passionate entreaty in her eyes, Shorder thought of Brünnhilde's words to Siegmund as he puts by the glory of Walhalla:—

So light dost thou hold eternal joy? Is she thy all, this hapless woman, Who, weary and suffering, Helpless hangs in thy arms? Nought else deem'st thou holy?

To him, Leonor was the one thing holy and beautiful in life. He had never loved her so much as at that moment. Her clinging arms, her frantic effort to get closer into his shielding embrace, her lifted frightened face of imploring entreaty for his shelter, her hot words of contrition and supplication, touched to fire all the protecting passion of a strong man's love, and he was her slave to do with him as she willed.

"Nothing on earth shall touch a hair of your head," he muttered, lifting her like a child in his arms. "Do you doubt my love, little Leonor? I am not afraid. I shall always guard you from harm. No hurt shall come to you."

He carried her to a sofa and sat down with her in his arms. She grew calm under the sense of his immense strength and drew peace to her soul from the depths of his great love.

"I thought he was dead," she whispered, nestling against him as he held her in his arms. "I did not sin. I thought he was dead. Listen to me, and believe what I say to you. We lived in Medina del Campo and my parents made me marry this Pedro Cabrera. He used me very ill. Three months after our marriage he made me go to work, and went constantly to

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Salamanca. He used to beat me, and often threatened But he was a coward. I discovered to murder me. that he belonged to a group of anarchists in Salamanca. and that he hated me because he hated life through the fear in which he lived from the politicians whose vows he had taken. He became gentler to me and would cry on my shoulder, and say that he wished he were dead. One day he told me the reason of his grief. He was to kill a great Empress. did not kill her, he would be killed himself. was watched by his politicians, and dared not escape. I begged him not to assassinate the Empress, and he told me that he could only let her free at the cost of his own life and that afterwards she would be killed by another. Then came the day when he had to go on this mission. 'If I do not come back in seven days,' he said, 'you will know that I am dead.' Three weeks went by, he did not come. I stayed in Medina for three months, and then I came to Valladolid to work with the chocolate makers. I never heard from him a word, and no one ever told me that he was not dead. All I asked from life was to live in peace, and never again to know the fear of a man's cruelty. A year passed, then you came to me, and I learned what love was. I have been so happy. I want so much to live-" she sobbed as if her heart would break, exclaiming passionately, "and now he comes back and makes me criminal!"

"Peace," he whispered, "I will deal with him."

He took his arms from her, told her to stay quiet, and returned to Cabrera, who was smoking by the window and glancing from behind a curtain into the square below.

For an hour Shorder contended with the man who

had come back from the dead and at the end of it he was led to the sacrifice of all he counted happy and wholesome in life.

Pedro Cabrera's terms were these: He would leave Leonor, if Shorder left her. He would forbear from making her a criminal, if Shorder promised never to see her again. His jealousy could not permit of the thought that Shorder possessed his wife.

Offers of money were refused. Threats were countered by the menace of exposing Leonor as a criminal. Shorder could not touch Pedro without hurting his wife. And in a few months Leonor would become a mother.

He remembered Leonor's terror of Pedro. His mind had to devise some means whereby, even if he gave up Leonor, her life should be free from all possibility of intimidation from Pedro.

The man was half in his power, and yet he was the master of the situation. He could ruin Leonor, he could make Shorder's child a shame to her.

There was only one way out; Shorder must give up this man's wife; he must lay down all the happiness of his life; and, at the same time, he must, for her sake, make himself the gaoler of the man who had power over him and her.

To save Leonor, he must sacrifice himself. To save his child, he must destroy his happiness. The world must never know that Cabrera lived, no, not even for the few hours which stood between the assassin and the scaffold.

He told Pedro that he would consent to leave Leonor, and that he would promise never to see her again, nor to do anything that would imperil Pedro's liberty. But on one condition, that Pedro came to England

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and lived with him as his servant. "I must be always under your eye," he said bitterly, and added grimly, "and you must be always under mine."

Pedro at last consented to these terms. He was glad to get rid of Spain and the politicians from whom he had flown in terror; he was glad to have provision made for his life; and in his jealousy he foresaw a savage delight in the prospect of having the man who had stolen his wife's love from him always under his menacing watch.

In this way Shorder came to lose his wife and to put his existence under the hated dominance of Pedro Cabrera. His sense of honour was so quick that he could not have lived any longer with another man's wife; and his love for Leonor was so deep and fervent that no sacrifice was too great which secured her freedom from her rightful husband. To save her from Pedro was now the business of his days; that soon death might deliver them both from the rightful husband was his one hope left in existence.

He made ample provision for Leonor; tore himself from her embraces, and took her husband to England as Pedro Almeida.

He heard no word of his wife until one day a picture of a child was sent to him in a gold locket with nothing but the name "Andrea" engraved upon it.

Eleven years after, on that day, when he had ridden post haste to the Headland begging Beatrice to go at once to Valladolid, he had heard again. Leonor had broken her vow and had written to him by the hand of Andrea. She asked to see him for an hour; that was all. He could not ask Pedro for permission to break his vow; the man was itching to get away from Shorder's overmastering guardianship, and was already

showing signs of open rebellion. So Shorder had asked Beatrice to go to Valladolid, to see Leonor and to tell her that she came from him.

Pedro's suspicions were awakened by Beatrice's journey abroad. He wrote secretly to Spain, and went to Cowey to receive his answer. Shorder's wrath had blazed out against him. He had flogged the man, and had threatened to kill him. He made him go with him now wherever he went, and swore by all the gods at once that Pedro should be taken out to sea and drowned if he dared any longer to withstand his master's authority.

Such was the situation when, by the hand of Rodwell, Shorder received a letter from Beatrice telling him that Leonor was dying and enclosing a photograph of Andrea.

The long years of embitterment, and the effect of his wild exercises and deep drinking, had not dulled the edge of his boy's love for the Spanish woman in Valladolid. And yet he might have gone to her—he might even have taken Pedro with him and so have saved his honour in the matter of the vow; but he did not go. The locket round his neck held him a prisoner. A child he had never seen, because she was his child, would not let him go. He would not risk putting that child under the power of Pedro. He remained at Bartown, struggling with sullen energy to avert the bankruptcy of which Jevvers and Colver had advertised him, and in the seriousness of his business concerns, struggling to forget the dismal end to the romance of his youth.

And when Fate delivered him from Pedro it took also Leonor.

"I am glad you saw her," he said, looking out to sea, and Beatrice said her life was the richer for having touched Leonor's if only for a moment.

"I loved her," exclaimed Shorder, almost passionately, and checked himself. After a pause he said in his natural voice, "I don't know why it is, but I'm fond of all little things. I like little flowers. I like little hills. These Downs for me knock the Alps into a cocked hat. I hate your Lake District." He turned and looked at Beatrice. "I'm in love with little Andrea," he said slowly. "She's worth all the rest of God's universe to me."

"I am so glad she is with you."

"Leonor was like a little shrew-mouse," he said, looking away to sea. "I used to pick her up in my arms and carry her about like a baby. Deuce take us all! what a puzzle life is! It won't matter a straw to you if I tell you something; but, much as I admire you, and even if there had never been Leonor, I couldn't get to love you. I couldn't, on my honour! I think you're splendid. I look up to you. I take my hat off to you. I do you reverence. But you're too strong and steady and sure of yourself to make a man like me! love you. I can't love anything that isn't a pocket edition. And yet, I know you are better worth loving than any woman in the world I have ever met."

He stopped speaking, and she watched him staring across the twinkling sea with eyelids half-closed to shut out the glare of the sun.

"There's one thing more I should like to ask you to do for me," he said presently, keeping his gaze away from her. "I should like you, if you don't mind doin' it, to take little Andrea to church now and then. She's that way inclined."

"Won't you take her?" she asked.

"Well, you see, I don't like church," he answered, half smiling; "I'd do anythin' for the child, but churchgoin' makes me irreligious, it does on my honour! Sometimes out on the moor, or goin' a gallop, I feel that God must be good. But when I used to go to church I only had one feelin', and that was that man is shoddy. No, my nature's against church. I'm an anti-churchman. I can't help it. I was born like it."

"But you must take Andrea," she said. "There will be no one else unless you ask Miss Taylor, who is going to take charge of my Rest Home when it opens again. I am going away. I am going to help Richard Rodwell."

"What!" he exclaimed, "you're goin' on this Socialist Crusade?"

"I wish," she said earnestly, "that I could begin my work by touching your heart."

"Oh!" he laughed, "you must leave me out of that galley. I carry too much lee helm for revivalists."

"You're so much nearer to the secret than you think," she made answer.

"What secret?" he demanded.

"The secret of life, the secret of the universe. Andrea will lead you."

"She could lead me anywhere—to the devil," he laughed; "if she leads me to heaven so much the better."

"Remember," Beatrice said with slow reproof, "there is some one in heaven waiting for both of you."

He got up from the bench, and standing up in front of her, laughing and ill at ease, he said, "You're too clever for me. You could talk me into a monastery. I won't listen to you. But you're of the salt of the

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earth, and Rodwell's one of fortune's lucky sons. I think you two together might go near setting the Thames on fire. He's a bit cold to my touch, and you're not exactly a Catharine-wheel; but I expect that when you both go preachin' together you'll rouse the devil. You'll egg each other on. You'll warm to the work. We shall have another Wesley conflagration. Well, good luck to both of you. Andrea and I will follow on a bit slower; peradventure, as the Book says, we may find there's more than one way to the golden shore."

"Let me tell you," she said, looking up at him, "what I think is the first step on any road. I think it is this, an honest attempt to realize God. I'm not preaching, don't smile, and don't run away. I really want to say this to you. Let me tell you for Andrea's sake. I should like to think of you taking her out at night and showing her the stars; standing there in the quiet, feeling that the earth is part of a vast universe governed by law and inspired by intelligence. Teach her not to look upon the earth as a little thing all by Teach her not to think of man's intelligence as something separate from the rest of the intelligence in the universe. Teach her to think of the power of that Being who has called Himself 'I AM.' It is a good thing, a very excellent thing, to try and comprehend God. It leads to fear, and fear throws us on to love. All the flippancy in the modern world, all the boastful courage towards death, is due to lack of imagination. No man of imagination can help fearing God. You have only got to think for a little. and you must fear. I am not thinking only of men like you who openly live without religion. I am speaking of religious people, people who think they have

imagination and emotion. How seldom one meets a priest who convinces one that he has really realized the power and dominion of an infinite God. It requires a poet like Goethe to say, 'Who dare name Him?' The world, because it cannot think about Him, ceases to fear Him. But, believe me, He is to be feared."

"I believe you," answered Shorder. "It's just because parsons make it so easy that I don't hold with them. When I think of the Almighty, I lay my hand on my mouth, and the talkative side of my nature lies very low."

"I should like you to know," said Beatrice, rising from the bench and standing in front of him, "because I once sent you to Richard Rodwell to dispute with him about religion—do you remember?—that it is he who has brought me to perceive the need for preaching the fear of God. I used to think he stood a little beneath me: used to think I saw further than he did, and so, indeed, it was then. But while I stood still, he was climbing upward. He stands above me now; but he will lift me up to him. I see already something of the vision that he sees. I see that it is vain to hope for a purer, a kinder, or a juster world until we have learned to realize all that is meant by the word 'God.' I see that before selfishness and cruelty go from the earth, men will have to learn to fear God. I see that before politics can vivify Religion, and before Religion can give passion to politics, men must learn to conceive of God and learn to fear Him. Do you see what I mean? Before a man can use Life, he must fear the Author of it. That is the beginning. I used to say it was a poor religion which frightened men into heaven; it is easy

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to say things like that; now I know that without fear there is no religion. No man has comprehended God who has not feared."

"I hate a man," said Shorder, "who swaggers about death, and who thinks that he can land in the next world, if there is a next world, as easily as he steps out of a steamer at Margate. But I don't think it's much use to ask people to try to comprehend the incomprehensible. I don't really. You may be right. But I think you're tryin' Tom, Dick, and Harry a bit high. Still, have a shot at it. I see what you mean. People haven't got any imagination. You think you can give it to them. Well, good luck to your preachin'."

Beatrice touched him upon the arm. "It's all a matter of making people think, forcing them to think. Society isn't what we wish it to be. Why don't we alter it? Because so few think about it. Do you believe, that if great numbers of men and women really thought about all the horrors of our prisons, the tragedies of our hospitals, the indescribable shame and destitution of our city slums, really thought about them and really realized them, that such barbarities could exist for another session of Parliament? It is the same with the Church. If the Church thought about its mission, and really realized that selfishness is the cause of all cruelty, injustice, and sin, it would be a live Church, a power in the affairs of men, a true worker for the coming of the Kingdom of God."

"Well," said Shorder, turning to her with a smile, "if it satisfies you to know it, you've set me thinkin' already. I congratulate Rodwell from the bottom of my heart. He's got in you somethin' worth puttin' into his sermons. They tell me he has caught fixe

lately; that he's less of the Art Parson and more of the 'Mene, mene, tekel upharsin' order. I'm not sorry to hear it. More power to his elbow. But what beats me, beats me hollow, is the man's conversion of my friend, Miss Haly! I always regarded you as miles ahead of him. I don't mind tellin' you now that I thought you a deal too good for him. But now, somehow or another, you seem to me to have caught alight, and to have become better than you were: and you tell me it's Parson Rodwell's work. Deuce take it, the world's as full of surprises as a gorse bush of prickles! I'm off. I'm goin' to meet Andrea. I see I've interrupted you in readin' one of Rodwell's letters. I must have bored you. Good-bye, my friend."

"Good-bye," she said, giving him her hand, and lifting her face to look at him.

"If there were more women like you," he said, "men wouldn't be so bad as they are. Women don't know how men like a woman they can talk to."

She smiled. "Don't forget to show Andrea the stars," she said, as he moved away.

"You should have heard me just now," he said, "tryin' to play Parsifal to her!"

She stood in the light which the setting sun threw across the moor and watched him striding away from her. As he drew further away she saw in the distance, slowly climbing the hill down which he would presently disappear, the figure of Rodwell.

The two men drew nearer and nearer together as she stood and watched them. The figure of Rodwell emerged above the line of the hill, and showed at last clear against the sky.

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She saw them meet and halt on the moor. They did not shake hands. They stood with a little space between them, talking together. Rodwell was motionless. Shorder's arm swung at his side, and he was chafing at the ground with his feet. Presently Shorder moved on, speaking parting words over his shoulder. Rodwell stood still facing towards him. Then Shorder came back, beating at the bushes with his stick and stood once more at Rodwell's side. They talked for some moments again; she saw Rodwell lay his hand almost affectionately on the other's shoulder, and then Shorder put out his hand and Rodwell took it, and they stood together for a moment against the sky.

She watched them part. Just as they were moving away, they both checked and looked in the same direction, as though they had been hailed. Beatrice followed their gaze and saw coming across the moor towards them the tall bowed figure of Simon Eyre, with Andrea at his side. The old weather-beaten man, in his cloak and steeple-crowned hat, and leaning heavily on his stick, was looking down at the child, and she, with a bunch of wild flowers in her hand, was glancing up at him.

Beatrice saw that the old man and the child had met on the farther side of the down, that they had made friends, scarcely understanding each other's speech, and that the child had induced him to climb the hill with her.

The eyes of Beatrice softened as she watched them. "The child," she said softly to herself, "is bringing peace to her father."

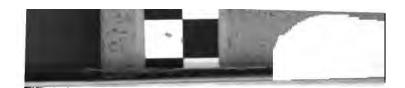
She saw Shorder bid good-bye to Rodwell and go forward to meet the old man and the child. She let

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her eyes follow them down the descent of the hill till they were lost to view. "Andrea is leading him," she said. Then she turned her gaze to the advancing form of Rodwell, and waited for him.

THE END





But heard are the Voices, Voices of the Sages, The Worlds and the Ages:— Choose well, your choice is Brief and yet endless.





Sch/eun'ng

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